

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to Labour 50p

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20 years since the Brixton riot

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Solidarity price £1

Pharmaceutical companies to meet in London

BLAIR BACKS FIRMS WHO LET HER DIE

“THE GOVERNMENT is capitulating to big business.” That’s the verdict of Sophia Tickell of the Oxfam charity on Tony Blair’s latest move on behalf of giant multinational corporations.

He and his New Labour government have come out fighting—for the right of the giant drugs companies to profit even while people are dying.

Blair has endorsed a government report which backs the drugs companies’ battle to uphold their patents on drugs which can treat AIDS and TB.

That means denying the poorest countries the right to produce or buy cheaper versions of these drugs.

People across Africa are dying simply because they can’t pay the price demanded by drugs multinationals like GlaxoSmithKline and Merck.

On 1 May New Labour is welcoming big business to a conference on patents and “intellectual property” in London.

Everyone disgusted by these profiteers, and by New Labour’s slavish support for them, should make sure they get the welcome they really deserve.



ELIZA MWASE died in Malawi from AIDS three hours after this photograph was taken

Number of millionaires has doubled under New Labour

THINGS have certainly got better for some under New Labour.

The number of millionaires in Britain has more than doubled in the last five years.

In 1995 there were 33,063 millionaires. By last year that had soared to 73,990, according to a survey by the Datamonitor market research group.

These are the people New Labour refuses to tax to pay for public services. And it is from this select group that New Labour hopes to pocket even more six figure handouts—in return for even more favours after the election of course.

But while a tiny minority of the rich get richer, the poor get poorer in Blair’s Britain.

A report by Bristol, York, Loughborough and Herriot-Watt universities found that 26 percent of people in Britain are now living in poverty, defined as having low income and being unable to afford basic household necessities.

That figure has grown from 14 percent living in such poverty back in 1983.

The way to tackle poverty is simple—tax the rich to fund services and provide jobs.

Build the socialist election campaign

pages 3, 12, 14 & 16

WORKERS' PENSIONS RIPPED OFF

City firms joined in Maxwell's swindling

THE OFFICIAL report into Robert Maxwell's massive fraud shows that almost every top City firm was involved in covering up for his theft.

The "respectable" bankers and financiers watched as Maxwell plundered £450 million of pension funds to prop up his *Mirror* media empire.

Their directors grab millionaire salaries and are

fawned on by government. This report reveals they are indistinguishable from the most brazen Mafia clan.

The guilty companies include:

● Goldman Sachs, the super-profitable investment bankers.

It helped Maxwell manipulate share prices and, says the report, bear "substantial responsibility" for letting Robert Maxwell get away with his manoeuvres.

A Goldman partner acted for Maxwell frontmen to buy shares which raised prices.

This partner then told the inquiry he did not know Maxwell was the real buyer.

The inquiry did not believe him.

Goldman Sachs made £23 million profit from its Maxwell dealings. It was eventually fined £160,000 for breaches of rules.

● Samuel Montagu & Co, the bank that masterminded the initial stock market launch of Maxwell's MGN corporation.

The report says it included "inaccurate and misleading" details in the share prospectus. Samuel Montagu & Co is now part of the giant HSBC bank.

● Coopers & Lybrand

Deloitte accountants "failed to report abuses" to pension fund trustees. They also caved in to pressure from Maxwell at key points.

● Labour peer Lord Donaghue, a Maxwell director, ought to have been able to find out what was going on. But he never asked the obvious questions.

● City firms Lehman Brothers, Nikko, Capel Cure Myers, Morgan Grenfell and NatWest Investment Management were all found guilty of breaches of rules concerning dealings with Maxwell pension funds.

'Anyone reading the Maxwell report could be forgiven for thinking the City is a nest of vipers ready to collude with any crook, facilitate any fraud, and pillage any pension fund.'
● FRANK KANE, *Observer business editor*

As early as 1971 a Department of Trade and Industry report came to a damning conclusion.

It said that "Robert Maxwell is not in our opinion a person who can be relied on to exercise proper stewardship of a public company."

He had rigged shares, lied about company performance and overstated profits.

None of this mattered to the City. They saw the chance to get their hands on more loot and allowed Maxwell to repeat all his crooked deals on a

greater scale.

When it all came tumbling down it was not the bankers who lost out. It was the workers for Maxwell's firms who saw their pension funds ripped away.

'Maxwell was only able to accomplish his fraud because so many advisers and bankers turned a blind eye to what he was up to.'

● KEN HUDGELL, *Association of Mirror Pensioners*

New Labour's own scandal

IN THE same week that the Maxwell report showed how private firms raid pension funds, New Labour's new system of driving everyone towards private pensions came into operation.

"Stakeholder pensions", government-approved private pensions, were to go on sale on Friday this week.

The government's strategy is to let the basic state pension wither in value and make everyone look after themselves.

A 25 year old would have

to put away £233 a month for 40 years into a stakeholder pension to achieve an income at 65 equivalent to £15,000 a year.

A 40 year old would have to spend £451 a month to get the same result.

But stakeholder pensions represent a fantastic tax gain for the rich.

A highly paid boss with a wife who does not work can now put £3,600 a year into a stakeholder pension in his wife's name and benefit from tax relief on the contributions.

Protest criminalised

SOME 200 police raided a disused factory in south London last weekend in an effort to whip up hysteria about anti-capitalist demonstrations planned for May Day.

The former button factory in Herne Hill has been squatted for some time by homeless people and campaigners. It has been used as a meeting place.

This was sufficient for the

police to storm the empty building and for its owner to then smash up the structure to "make it uninhabitable".

Violent

Police claimed they had thwarted an "anarchist training weekend which was preparing for violent demonstrations".

The Metropolitan Police

commissioner, Sir John Stevens, has cancelled all police leave for 1 May and vowed that people who are labelled as organisers of last year's anti-capitalist actions will be taken off the streets.

The authorities are trying to create an atmosphere where anyone who protests about injustice and capitalism's crimes becomes a legitimate target for repression.

RACISM FUELS NEW ATTACKS

THE TORIES last week withdrew a planned election broadcast attacking asylum seekers after even Tory MPs felt they couldn't get away with such overt racism.

Tory home secretary Ann Widdecombe said that they "had no intention of deploying such a broadcast" on Friday of last week.

Yet only days before she had repeated that Britain was a "soft touch for bogus asylum seekers".

John Townend MP also exposed the Tories' true racist face last week.

He claimed, "Our Anglo Saxon society has been seriously undermined by the massive immigration, particularly Commonwealth immigration, that has taken place since the war."

"Illegal immigrants have got a new ploy. They call themselves asylum seekers. In my view the only way to deal with the problem is to send them back quickly."

Comments like this were condemned by the Council of Europe's Commission against Racism and Intolerance this week.

It criticised Britain's right wing media for "consistent inflammatory attacks on asylum seekers coming into the United Kingdom".

The commission's report said articles in the media and politicians' promotion of anti-refugee laws "have

played a fundamental role" in fostering racism against immigrants.

This climate is encouraging attacks on black and Asian people.

A Bengali father of two was stabbed to death in Bow, east London, last Sunday.

Witnesses say 34 year old Shiblu Rahman was attacked by a gang of white youths.

A 15 year old student, Harifur Rahman, had a broken bottle smashed over his head in Bermondsey, south London, on Friday of last week. He and his brother were attacked by a 20-strong gang as they walked home from a wedding.

And Kurdish asylum seeker Ary Ahmed was attacked in Liverpool last week as he returned to his refugee hostel. Three white men stabbed him in the head.



RELATIVE grieves over murder in east London this week



CORUS CON

CORUS STEEL bosses offered hope last week to workers they have earmarked for job cuts, then brutally tore away that hope the same day.

After meeting the ISTC union and trade secretary Stephen Byers, Corus made some noises about accepting possible plans for retraining and part time working which could temporarily keep some of the 6,000 on the payroll.

But company chiefs then briefed the financial press

saying, "We've heard nothing that changes our mind about the size of job cuts or the timescale."

A company spokesman also told the *Observer* that if there were jobs to be saved they would be on Teesside, not in Wales, "because the Welsh are less likely to strike".

ISTC leaders are wrong to have shelved the plans for a strike ballot. They should be campaigning for a strike now across Britain.

ROBBER MAXWELL

did things get better?

■ A SPOT check of hospital casualty units last week found at least 20 patients who were experiencing "unacceptable" waits of more than 24 hours.

The survey was carried out by community health councils, which the government now wants to abolish.

They found a 93 year old woman with hypothermia and leg ulcers who was kept waiting for more than 30 hours, and a 41 year old woman with abdominal pains who spent more than 54 hours in casualty at Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

■ RAILTRACK has conned another £1.5 billion from the government—and it wants still more.

The money is part of a £15 billion package over five years.

When Railtrack was sold off, shareholders paid less than £700 million for it. Now the government is giving the company 20 times that amount. Why is it not taking it back at the same time?

■ MANUFACTURING firms believe a recession is coming. A survey released this week showed the first fall in order books for this sector for two years.

Managers expect workers to pay the price of keeping profits high.

Job losses announced this week include:

● 700 axed at Compaq computers in Erskine, Renfrewshire.

● 140 jobs to go at SSL medical products on Merseyside.

● 80 job losses at EMAP publishers.

Fighting privatisation



Picture: JESS HURD

THE POTENTIAL to stop privatisation

'Tremendous support from public' says striker

TUBE WORKERS defied the anti-union laws and struck a blow against privatisation last week.

Their second strike brought London Underground to a halt.

Management admitted that not a single tube train ran the length of the line.

The 8,000 members of the RMT union on the tube struck officially. Drivers in the ASLEF union remembered the solidarity they had got on their own official strike in February and refused to cross RMT picket lines.

"There was tremendous support

from the public," said a picket at Brixton station. "People broke step to come over and tell us we were doing the right thing."

Pickets at other stations and Socialist Alliance campaigners who had gone to offer support all reported a similar response.

This was the real story of the strike, not the article in the right wing London *Evening Standard* which claimed commuters wanted to string up strikers.

People hate New Labour's crazy tube privatisation plan. They want a clear alternative that will improve

transport in the capital.

London mayor Ken Livingstone is threatening court action against New Labour's scheme, but he still wants talks with the government.

His transport commissioner, Bob Kiley, says he is against the fragmentation of the tube under privatisation, but he attacked last week's strike.

ASLEF leaders have accepted a rotten compromise which will not guarantee safety and jobs.

But tube workers showed last week how determined strike action can stop privatisation.

Socialist Alliance rallies

BIRMINGHAM: Sunday 8 April, 7pm, Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Digbeth. Speakers include Mark Steel, Caroline Johnson and Steve Godward.

HOVE: Thursday 12 April, 8pm, Portslade Town Hall, Victoria Road.

NORWICH: Thursday 12 April, 7.30pm, Hog in Armour, Charing Cross.

TELFORD: Wednesday 18 April, 7.30pm, Chetwood Hall, Phoenix School, Webb Crescent, Dawley.



Socialist Alliance

what we think

Exposed at top level meeting...

Blair's fear over poll

SO THE tedious speculation about whether the election will be delayed has ended.

But will the really important issues now get a hearing above the din surrounding foot and mouth? Not if Tony Blair can help it.

He outlined his strategy for the election campaign at a recent meeting of Labour's national executive committee.

According to one of its dissident members, Ann Black, Blair's strategy is "to show that the election is not a referendum on Labour, but a choice between Labour and the Tories".

Anyone can look good next to William Hague, Ann Widdecombe and Michael Portillo.

The argument between Blair and Hague is about who best represents the interests of the rich. That

is why their debate descends to dull bickering.

But the vibrant discussion among working class people across Britain is about who can best stand up for the millions of ordinary people the government has abandoned.

The Socialist Alliance and Scottish Socialist Party election campaigns have begun to tap that feeling over the last few weeks.

The delay in the election gives the mainstream parties the chance to bore us rigid.

It gives socialists the opportunity to draw wider forces into the challenge to New Labour. That means stepping up the profile and activity of the Socialist Alliance with leafleting, stalls, and community and workplace meetings to show the alternative to Blair.

No trial for Bush

US PRESIDENT George Bush and Tony Blair are insisting the Serbian authorities hand ex Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic over to a war crimes tribunal.

That tribunal has nothing to do with justice. It is funded by US billionaire George Soros, is pro-Western, and is forbidden from considering the war crimes committed by NATO in the Balkans.

The US has vetoed calls for an independent international court, which would look at the war crimes of ALL states.

No wonder—many US leaders, officials and their allies would also be in the dock.

George Bush's dad would face charges over bombing the Basra road in Iraq which massacred Iraqi troops while they were retreating.

War crimes should include the US and British governments' sanctions against Iraq, which are killing civilians every day.

Israeli leader Ariel Sharon oversaw the slaughter of 2,000 Palestinians in Beirut in 1982, and last week he ordered the assassination of Palestinian politicians.

These are the sorts of crimes Milosevic is charged with.

Western leaders want to be judge and jury, but their record on war crimes is just as rotten.

Why US v China?

THE US and China are blaming each other for the collision of two warplanes over the South China Sea.

But what the hell is the US air force doing

thousands of miles from home?

US president George Bush, with poodle Blair, says he must spend billions more on "defence".

The West's arms spending is about attack and protecting the interests of the multi-nationals—even if this means risking a third world war.

OUT NOW

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SPARKS
FLY

1,000 say no to Nazis

OVER 1,000 anti-Nazi campaigners marched through Oldham last Saturday in a defiant show of black and white unity against the Nazi National Front.

The march came after meetings of between 300 and 500 people to help build the protest.

●Full story page 14

United against bosses

OVER 100 engineers on London United buses went on strike last week after management sacked two workers.

Workers voted for the three day official strike because they believe management is attacking union activists.

●Full story page 15

We didn't gobble up offer

WORKERS at the Bernard Matthews factory in Norfolk have rejected a management proposal for annualised hours by 90 percent.

"It's hardly a bootiful offer," said one worker.

Matthews is among the top 50 richest people in Britain. Yet his company is offering the workers a miserable 3 percent pay rise.

Strike pays off

COUNCIL workers in Knowsley have learned that striking gets results.

After six days of all-out strike action plus selective strikes by groups of workers over the last two months, workers have forced the council to retreat over increasing working hours.

●Full story page 15

Postal workers send message

REPRESENTATIVES from the CWU union in branches across London are meeting next week to discuss the possibility of a ballot across the capital for strikes.

The move follows Royal Mail's office closure programme and repeated attacks on working conditions.

Hackney

Five day fight

COUNCIL WORKERS in Hackney, east London, in the UNISON union are voting on a five-day strike from Monday 30 April.

A 600-strong mass meeting on Monday backed the strikes and called for a meeting during the strike week to consider escalation to an indefinite stoppage.

Workers poured into the nearby town hall after the meeting and briefly occupied it in protest at disciplinary action against one of their stewards, Noah Tucker.

The crunch is now coming between the union and the Labour-Tory coalition which runs the council. The council leaders are determined to make £50 million of cuts,

savage workers' conditions and close vital services.

Every council worker, whichever union they may be in, must campaign for a solid shutdown from 30 April and press for an indefinite strike.

Other workers should try to win solidarity support for the council workers during the strike, especially on May Day, Tuesday 1 May.

Campaigners are celebrating two victories against cuts. A strong protest movement has kept the Huddleston centre for the young disabled open and won some funding from the council.

Parents, staff and school students have also fought to keep Burbage School open and won.

Daily Record march

Not a high point in drugs debate

KEVIN OVENDEN reports from Glasgow

THE MARCH in Scotland over drugs which has been pushed by the Daily Record went ahead last Sunday.

The newspaper has been running a vicious campaign against socialist MSP Tommy Sheridan, who has argued for a more rational approach to the

drugs issue.

The *Daily Record* boasts that four in ten Scots read the paper—1.5 million people.

Just 4,000 people came on its march despite free transport laid on by millionaire bus baron and anti-gay bigot Brian Souter.

The *Record* on Monday claimed that 20,000 people marched. But the whole demonstration took 19 minutes to pass—with about 200 people going by each minute.

The march clearly did attract working class people who are frightened about the spread of dangerous drug use, mainly heroin injecting.

Their concern was genuine. The *Record's* motives were not.

Pushing

Most people on the march who spoke to *Socialist Worker* said they were there to show that they wanted to stop vulnerable young people turning to dangerous drug use out of desperation.

"Just because I am here does not mean I agree with the *Record*," said Sandra Irvine from Maryhill in Glasgow. "It has been pushing its own agenda. But it said this was a march to stand with the victims of drugs, and that's why I am here."

"We need to look at ways of dealing with the problem."

The *Record's* campaign has cut against any serious

debate over drugs.

It abused anyone, particularly Tommy Sheridan, who pointed out that US-style policies over drugs have failed in America's inner cities and in Scotland over the last ten years.

Yet it has laid into campaigners who have argued, along with the doctors' British Medical Association and other ultra-respectable bodies, that treating cannabis the same as heroin was a dangerous and failed policy.

Scottish Tory leader David McLetchie used the opportunity to put himself in the front row of the march.

March

Yet 18 years of Tory rule created much of the despair on working class housing schemes that lead some people to take drugs that can damage them.

The *Record* was full of moving stories on Monday from people whose relatives had died from illegal drug use.

But the paper and politicians could offer them nothing except pious words.

Stop drugs hypocrisy, says Tommy

"THE HYPOCRISY of the *Record* is sickening," said Tommy Sheridan at a packed rally called by the Scottish Socialist Party on Sunday afternoon.

The *Record* claims its campaign is non-political. But it has tried to create a witch-hunt against Sheridan.

Its editorial on Thursday of last week said he was "the human equivalent of the single minded lowlife" found under rocks on the beach.

And it called on people "to remember this when the general election is announced" and at the next Scottish parliamentary elections.

Sheridan's crime is to have told the truth.

Equating cannabis use with heroin use and failing to treat heroin addicts through prescriptions on the NHS have made problem drug use worse.

He pointed out that only a few months ago the *Record* was giving away coupons for cheap

lager. Over 1,000 people in Scotland die every year from alcohol-induced liver cancer.

Tobacco kills 13,000 people in Scotland every year. Cannabis is not known to kill anyone.

Yet three quarters of all drug convictions in Britain are for cannabis possession.

Cheers

Kevin Williamson, who writes on drug policy, spoke at the rally. He listed the countries that have now decriminalised cannabis and are dealing with heroin use by prescription through GPs. They include Switzerland, where drug use is plummeting.

There were cheers when speakers challenged the *Record* to call a march against poverty, which the Scottish Executive's own Social Inclusion Unit has identified as the "main pathway to heroin use".

Asbestos battle



Picture: DUNCAN BROWN

WORKERS MARCHING for justice against asbestos poisoning

EMPLOYERS 'MURDERED THOSE MEN'

ANOTHER MARCH in Glasgow last weekend, over deaths from a deadly dust, did not even get a mention in the *Record* on Monday.

Over 400 people marched in Clydebank over the ongoing scandal of asbestos.

Thousands of former shipyard workers in Glasgow, and many others across Britain, were exposed to the killer dust in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.

"We were never told there was a danger," former shipyard worker Bert Storer, age 69, told *Socialist Worker*. "But it has been revealed that the employers

knew all the time."

Men in their fifties and sixties across Glasgow are now coming down with lung diseases, such as mesothelioma, caused by asbestos.

"We were breathing the stuff in every day," said Bert. "There was no safety equipment. They murdered those men."

"And now we are having to battle every inch of the way for compensation."

A worker from the Scot Lithgow yard in Greenock said, "We are demanding the government step in. We are more deserving than their rich pals."

The insurance company dealing with the workers' claims, Chester Street, has gone bust. Auditors raised problems over the company two months after it was set up in a merger deal.

Robert Hardy, the company's chief executive, got a "success" bonus payment of £439,000. He jumped ship before the collapse of Chester Street.

Disability rights

'It's worse than Tories'

WORKERS IN Remploy from across the country (see picture, left) joined a march in central London last Saturday demanding rights for disabled people.

Remploy workers succeeded in stopping the government-aided company from closing down factories and sacking workers last year.

They were furious that New Labour has targeted disabled people for cutbacks.

Ray Kirtley, a former miner, now a Remploy worker from Ashington in Northumberland, said, "Let's not mince our words, the government's been shit. They've treated disabled people worse than the Tories".

Claire Glassman was one of the disabled marchers who booed Margaret Hodge as she spoke at the rally. Claire was furious with the minister for attacking disabled people who need to claim benefits.



Picture: JESS HURD

VICTORY AT TEAM VALLEY BRUSH



RETURNING TO work on Monday morning

'Proud we went all out and won'

by TONY DOWLING, Tyneside Socialist Alliance

VICTORIOUS STRIKERS at Team Valley Brush in Gateshead went back to work on Monday demonstrating how they had won—by sticking together in solidarity.

After four weeks on all-out strike pickets assembled to march back into the factory together in a magnificent show of strength.

"We stuck together," says striker Ann Hardie, "and we just got stronger and stronger!"

"We're over the moon," says Karen Sharkey.

"It's taken us four weeks but we got there, and we go back in with our heads high. We stood here through sun, rain, snow and wind, but everybody stuck together and that's why we won."

The dispute began after workers were offered an insulting pay rise of 1 percent on their already miserable £3.08 an hour.

Company chairman Peter Wheeldon had refused to pay the minimum wage for the basic hourly rate, using a "loophole" in New Labour's weak legislation that allows the minimum £3.70 an hour to be made up with bonuses and overtime payments.

Wheeldon threatened to close the factory if workers went on strike.

"We've proved him wrong," says Barbara Patterson. "He only had the chiefs in there, but you can't run a factory without the indians."

Workers go back proud to have won the minimum wage as their basic hourly rate.

They have also won enhanced

overtime payments, an attendance allowance and new bonus rates—all based on the improved hourly basic.

"It's a good victory," says shop steward June Patterson. "But we've got to get the standards higher. He didn't think we'd stay out, but by last week he was a broken man."

The strikers raised their demands during the course of the strike and now want to be paid rates better than the minimum. The next pay review is due in July.

"We've got the peanuts up to coconuts," says Hazel Bell defiantly. "We've got stronger by fighting for our rights, but if we don't get something decent next time he knows we'll be back out. We're looking forward to better times."

Barbara Patterson from the strike

committee also thanked the Socialist Alliance and UNISON for their assistance in the Strike Support Group which organised solidarity and financial support.

"We couldn't have done it without your help," she said.

In the three days after the support group was launched last week collections brought in over £1,000, with donations from UNISON, MSF and GMB union branches, Gateshead Trades Council, Tyneside Socialist Alliance, ex Spartan Redheugh ISTC steel workers and bucket collections.

Revived

Strikers recognise it was the strength of their action, and the pressure that the solidarity brought, that won them victory.

"Our officials wanted us to take one-day strikes, but that wouldn't have affected Wheeldon," says one.

"They have been too slow and advised us to do too little. All-out action won this dispute."

The strikers know that there are other companies in the region that abuse the minimum wage legislation, but they hope that other workers follow their example.

Perhaps the slogan "The workers united will never be defeated" does not seem so old fashioned any more and needs to be revived by our union leaders.

■ **Send messages of congratulation to June Patterson, c/o GMB, Thorne House, 77-87 West Road, Newcastle NE15 6RB.**

■ **Victory social: Saturday 7 April, Swalwell Social Club.**



Hull caravan workers BETRAYED BY THE UNION

by SAM ASHMAN

STRIKING caravan workers in Hull returned to work last week.

The 500 workers were in their second week of all-out strike action against temporary contracts.

They returned to work after their own union behaved disgracefully and told the workers it was withdrawing support.

The workers' union, UCATT, withdrew support when management threatened to take the union to court.

Bosses of Willerby Holiday Homes threatened to use the law to say the union had not given enough warning of the whereabouts of the workforce when the action was to begin.

This follows a court ruling which made the RMT union call off a recent planned strike on London Underground.

It was bad enough in the case of London Underground. That was a

clear case of management using the law to demand information allowing it to plan a scabbing operation.

But Willerby Holiday Homes is a factory! Management knew exactly when and where the workers were going to be.

It is disgusting that UCATT did not make any attempt to resist the legal threat. It is also a disgrace that it is a change in employment law made by New Labour which has made this kind of challenge possible.

Heated

Management also sacked six workers last week, including the current shop steward and a former shop steward. They received letters saying they were dismissed for taking part in "unofficial" action.

The 500 strikers were furious at a mass meeting on Wednesday of last week.

"There was a very heated debate. People were disgusted," says

sacked shop steward Kevin Smith.

"They were saying, 'We've been sold out by the union.'"

"The strike was solid. It was going well. But once the union told us we had to go back it had a devastating effect. It put doubt in people's minds."

Workers voted at the meeting by around 70 percent to stay out and continue the strike, despite their union leadership.

But as a trickle back to work on Thursday morning became a pour, pickets decided it was best to go back to work.

"People had changed their minds," says Kevin.

"There was a steady stream of people going in. We had to beat a retreat."

"But I'm angry. I'm a shop steward for UCATT. I've fought this cause all the way along for our union. Now we have had the rug pulled from under us by our own union."

"We were on an official union picket line, and we have been sacked. It's disgusting."

inside the system

THINGS THEY SAY

"WE ARE listening to what employers are saying."

■TONY BLAIR, speaking to the British Chambers of Commerce conference last week

"MY BONUS of £760,000 wouldn't have given you bragging power in a Soho wine bar."

■SIR GEORGE MATHEWSON, deputy chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland

"WHAT A ghastly, vulgar little man."

■EDWARD HEATH, former Tory prime minister, on William Hague

"YOU NEVER hear debates about ethics or morals in Britain, just about saving money. It's no wonder the place is falling apart."

■LE MONDE newspaper

"I AM not an expert. Six weeks ago we were planning for a petrol crisis."

■BRIGADIER ALEX BIRTWISTLE, soldier in charge of the mass cull in Cumbria

"INSURING yourself against foot and mouth is not worthwhile."

■NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION SPOKESPERSON, 10 January 2001

"THE FIRST thing we should do is turn the dead cows upside down. It would look much less awful if their legs didn't stick up in the air."

■LABOUR MP overheard in the House of Commons tearoom

"WINSTON Churchill would be thrown out of New Labour for being too left wing."

■RORY BRENNER, comedian

"CHARLES and Camilla will not marry until the old lady [the queen mother] dies."

■SOPHIE, Countess of Wessex

"CHERIE BLAIR is horrid. Absolutely horrid, horrid, horrid."

■SOPHIE, Countess of Wessex

"I WAS offered a job at £5 an hour and asked if I could drive a JCB. That was it."

■MAN recruited by an agency to handle diseased carcasses of cows and sheep

And they want our sympathy?

FOR A sense of opinion among at least a section of the country folk who are demanding our money to compensate for foot and mouth, get on the web.

It is worth visiting the internet readers' forum of *Country Life* ("the voice of the countryside") and *Horse & Hound* ("the home of equestrianism").

Here is a selection of their views, written from houses worth half a million upwards by people on fat salaries:

●"I love the way in which the government are keeping quiet about all the illegal immigrants coming into our country.

"If they are sneaking in on lorries, how do we know what they are bringing with them? Foot and mouth came from somewhere, it wasn't lying dormant in the UK.

"Why the hell are they letting these people into our country who have no right to be here and our taxes are going towards housing them and making them comfortable whilst our own rural

communities go bankrupt. Keep the illegal immigrants out Mr Blair."

●"Right at the very beginning of the outbreak, a ministry vet, when I asked about the possible source, immediately replied 'illegal immigrant'. Did he know something that we don't?"

●"It's a nice easy life for illegal immigrants over here. We clothe them, feed them, house them and when they complain they are not getting enough money they give them an extra £50 a week."

●"We pay a lot more in taxes than many urban dwellers. I do not see huge council estates full of social security dependants being paid to do nothing and paying for nothing from the cradle to the grave here in the countryside!"

●"It's about time the urban masses stopped taking us for granted and did something for us! We pay huge taxes and get next to nothing in return."

●"Our MP is a Labour urbanite who likes to be called 'Ms'. I hardly need to say more!"



Playing statues

MPs ARE debating whether to put up a statue of Margaret Thatcher at Westminster—and Labour MP Tony Banks is supporting the idea.

"Chirpy Cockney" Banks is chairman of the Commons committee which has already commissioned the £50,000 marble image of Thatcher.

But Margaret Beckett, the leader of the House, has told him it is "inappropriate". Her reason is not Thatcher's politics, but because Thatcher is still alive.

Normal for a manager

HERE IS a strong contender for the worst boss in Britain.

According to evidence at an employment tribunal last week, shop owner Russell Taylor docked a worker's wages because she took a few days off following her partner's suicide.

Victoria Bell had

discovered her lover's body hanging from the garage roof.

But Taylor didn't even offer sympathy because it was "not in my normal behaviour pattern".

He refused to pay for Victoria's time off even though she had a sick note from her doctor covering her absence.

Two months later he sacked Victoria from her job at a shop in Ardgay, Ross-shire.

He claimed that she had gone on holiday a day before she was supposed to.

★ OIL giant BP has paid bonuses of £50 million to top bosses. Six directors and 500 senior executives received free shares last year.

They will get another £163 million worth over two years. BP-Amoco recently revealed profits of £350 a second.

Watch TV or else...

TWO TEENAGERS in Ohio in the US have been locked up in a juvenile detention centre for truancy after walking out of their classrooms in protest at compulsory viewing of Channel One.

Channel One is an in-school broadcaster, showing a daily compulsory 12-minute current affairs programme with two minutes of adverts targeted at children.

In return the schools are allowed to use the viewing equipment in other lessons.

Channel One can charge advertisers twice as much as usual because its audience cannot reach for the off switch or change channels.

Friend or foe

SOLDIERS IN the SAS, the British army's elite killers, seized a group of Albanians suspected of the mass killing of Serbs in Kosovo last week.

Four of those arrested are members of the Kosovo Protection Corps, the successor to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

The SAS trained the KLA in 1998 and 1999.

During NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia two years ago, US officials described the KLA as "our eyes and ears".

Tony Blair had his photo taken with KLA leader Hashim Thaci.

★ NEW Labour won't abolish the House of Lords and it also seems to have lost control of its alleged members in crucial debates.

In last week's votes over hunting, just 51 out of a total of 197 voted for an outright ban, the option supposedly favoured by Tony Blair.

However, 52 lords, including eight members of the government, voted for one of the two options for hunting to continue.

The revolt means hunting will survive until after the election.

comment

Can we unite with the right?

THE INTERNATIONAL movement against global capitalism continues to grow.

Last weekend I took part in "Anti-Capitalist Days" in Oslo organised by the Norwegian International Socialists.

ATTAC—the movement against international financial speculation that started in France in the late 1990s—is spreading like wildfire through Scandinavia. ATTAC was launched in Sweden at the beginning of the year.

The launch meeting of ATTAC Denmark attracted 1,200 people in Copenhagen. Four thousand have joined ATTAC in Norway since January.

Some 700 people have given their e-mail addresses to ATTAC in Finland.

The European Union summit in the Swedish city of Gothenburg on 14-16 June will provide this infant movement with its first test.

This gathering of the leaders of global capitalism will be the target of protests.

As the movement grows, the question of the strategy it should pursue comes into ever sharper focus. A paper called "The Global Conjunction" by Walden Bello and Nicola Bullard provides a good starting point for discussion.

Debate

Bello has been one of the key leaders of the movement against capitalist globalisation ever since Seattle.

At the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre he also wiped the floor with various bosses' representatives.

Bello and Bullard's paper offers an excellent analysis of the present situation. "A crisis of legitimacy now envelops the key institutions of global economic governance—the IMF, World Bank, and the WTO," they argue.

The international capitalist institutions have been thrown onto the defensive. It is time for their opponents to attack.

Bello and Bullard warn non-governmental organisations (NGOs) against falling for the "soft corporate counter-offensive" that seeks to draw them into a "dialogue" with these institutions.

Instead, they argue, "We must extend the crisis of legitimacy from the multilateral institutions of global governance to the engine of globalisation itself—the transnational corporation (TNC)."

"Corporations find it less and less possible to operate without engaging in criminal activity. The similarity between the Mafia and the TNC is something that we must continually stress in this campaign of delegitimation."

All this is absolutely spot on. In last Monday's *Financial Times*, Sir John Browne, chief executive of BP-Amoco, argues that big business must not "fall into the trap of seeing NGOs as automatic enemies", and that the multinationals and NGOs must work together as "agents of change".

Bello and Bullard are absolutely right to warn against critics of globalisation being co-opted by those who want to give the corporate Mafia a human face.

'The international capitalist institutions have been thrown on the defensive'

But they also suggest that these critics can form tactical alliances with the Republican right in the United States:

"When it comes to the IMF and the World Bank, the time is ripe to press and build up a global campaign for decommissioning or neutering these institutions."

Currently there are a number of influential appointees in the economic agencies of the Bush administration who favour either eliminating or radically reducing the role of the Bretton Woods institutions.

"With many Republicans and Democrats in Congress evincing similar sentiments, international civil society and labour unions might add their weight to form a critical mass that would determine the future of these institutions."

The problem with this approach is that it can too easily dovetail with the strategy implicit in Bush's denunciation of the Kyoto protocol.

As the *Financial Times* puts it, "Its uncompromising rejection of an internationally negotiated framework of government-imposed controls on business captured the twin essences of Bush's ideology—anti-regulatory at home, unilateralist overseas."

Viable

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Bush administration speaks for that section of US big business which is chafing at the restraints imposed on it by multilateral cooperation with other leading capitalist states.

Even international institutions like the IMF that have served the US well are seen as unnecessary obstacles to the assertion of American self-interest today.

It remains to be seen whether Bush's policy is a viable strategy for US capitalism. But in any case, what he and his supporters want is an even more deregulated, exploitative and environmentally destructive capitalism.

The importance of the demonstrations from Seattle onwards is that they have promoted a mass movement that challenges global capitalism from below.

There are various ways in which the establishment can try to co-opt us.

While avoiding the "soft corporate counter-offensive", we should also resist the temptation of even tactical alliances with some of our most dangerous enemies.

REPUBLICANS ON THE OFFENSIVE

Bush rewards US big business backers

THE CAMPAIGN for Nuclear Disarmament has called a demonstration at 10 Downing Street in a week's time.

It will demand that the British government does not cooperate with US president George W Bush's plans for a crazy new missile defence system, the "Son of Star Wars".

George Bush openly declared that business balance sheets are more important than the potential death of the planet last week. He restated his plans to spend \$26 billion on the new missile programme and he fully backed murderous repression carried out by Israel in the Middle East.

Tony Blair was the first European leader to rush to Washington and be photographed with Bush after his election.

This is why it is right to protest against Bush and the New Labour backing for his policies.

BUSH PUT two fingers up to the rest of the world last week and said he would not abide by the Kyoto protocol on global warming signed by the US in 1997.

It involved only the tiniest reforms—reducing greenhouse gases by 5 percent below 1992 levels by 2012.

STAR WARS

"THE National Missile Defence system is central to the way we look at the world," said Bush last week.

It will enable the US military to further its dream of being able to launch a nuclear strike without being open to retaliation. It will encourage every other ruling class to spend more and more on yet more horrific weaponry.

The rulers of the US also hope that by forcing China and Russia to spend more on weapons they will not be able to challenge the US economically.

The British government says it has not yet made up its mind about the Bush project. There are deep splits among European governments about whether to back it.

If New Labour does go ahead it will be at a huge price.

A single 20-missile battery would cost over £2 billion a year. Disgracefully, earlier this year Geoffrey Hoon, the defence secretary, said, "As the United States is our closest ally, we would want to be helpful should it make a specific request on the matter of the National Missile Defence."

Next week's demo should be the start of a wave of protest.

The US has just 4 percent of the world's population, but it is responsible for 25 percent of the greenhouse gases which are dangerously warming the planet.

These gases come from unregulated power stations, industrial plants and cars.

Bush made the speech. But big money was talking.

During two months in office Bush has shown that he is the polluter's friend.

He has also thrown out new standards limiting the amount of arsenic in drinking water, and has allowed mining companies to ignore fines for environmental damage.

Bush was born into the oil industry and followed his father into the business. His vice-president, Dick Cheney, was the top executive at Halliburton, the world's largest oil services company, from 1995.

BLAIR: first European leader to visit Bush

Bush and Cheney took \$47 million from energy companies for their campaign and then installed representatives of the biggest polluters at the centre of Bush's administration.

The interior secretary is Gale Norton, who made a name for herself concocting

bizarre legal theories to defend corporate polluters. She argued the US constitution means the government has to pay polluters not to damage the environment.

She is a follower of Reagan's interior secretary James Watt. He argued that there was not much point

worrying about the environment, as "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns."

Norton was a lobbyist for the National Lead Company and co-founded Republicans for Environmental Advocacy, which is sponsored by the National Coal Council, the Chemical Manufacturers Association, the National Mining Association and the Chlorine Chemical Council.

Her answer to the energy crisis in California, caused by the deregulation and private ownership of the service, is to drill for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Reserve.

The national security adviser is Condoleezza Rice,

former director of Chevron Oil, who has an oil tanker named after her.

Bush's biggest corporate backer is energy supplier Enron Corp, which gave \$1 million to his campaign.

As Texas state governor he made sure Enron was one of 26 companies exempted from compliance with clean air laws.

Bush is rewarding his backers by throwing the Kyoto agreement in the bin. It is a disgrace that New Labour continues to regard him as a friend.

Michael Meacher, New Labour's environment minister, responded to Bush's speech with, "I certainly don't think we should despair or try to ostracise the US."

Right to stand and be counted

SOME NEWSPAPERS have argued that Bush's move shows it was a mistake for left wingers to vote for Ralph Nader in the US presidential election.

But Clinton and Gore were not at all serious about implementing the Kyoto agreement.

Clinton allowed greenhouse gas emissions to rise by 12 percent between 1992 and 1997.

Clinton did nothing to

confront a Senate which had passed a resolution forbidding any treaty which harmed US "economic growth".

Gore would have been no better.

Meanwhile deputy prime minister John Prescott says last week shows he was right to push for a deal over climate change at The Hague last year. But his "deal" simply meant giving in to the right wing and big business in the US.

ISRAELI REPRESSION is backed by Bush

Israel kills six in raids

BUSH LINED up totally with Ariel Sharon, the war criminal who leads Israel, last week.

"The signal I am sending to the Palestinians is, stop the violence—and I can't make it any more clear. I hope that the Palestinian chairman Yasser Arafat hears it loud and clear.

"He's going to hear it on the telephone."

Bush was speaking just as Israeli helicopter gunships were returning from a murder mission against Palestinians in Ramallah.

More Palestinians died when they protested at the raids.

Israeli troops killed three

Palestinians, including two teenagers, in Gaza as street demonstrations took place following the attacks.

On Friday of last week thousands of Palestinians battled Israeli troops in a "day of rage".

Israeli troops murdered six people.

Militias

Six months after the Palestinian revolt against Israeli oppression began, at least 380 Palestinians, one third of them children, have been murdered by Israeli troops and settler militias.

Some 69 Israelis have died.

More than 12,000 Pales-

tinians have been injured, and many crippled, says the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Palestinians have lost land as Israeli forces have bulldozed thousands of hectares of crops in what are called "security measures".

Thousands of Palestinian families have fled homes destroyed or damaged in fighting, and many now live in tents.

The economy is in shreds, and more Palestinians live in poverty than before the uprising started.

United Nations figures show that 110,000 Palestinians who formerly worked in Israel are now unemployed.

Up to 40,000 Palestinians

**SAY NO TO
STAR WARS
.....
SATURDAY
14 APRIL,
12 NOON
DOWNING STREET,
LONDON**

**DEMONSTRATE
AGAINST
TRIDENT

SATURDAY
7 APRIL

ASSEMBLE FASLANE
11AM**

Jail threat to asylum campaigner

"I KNOW I could face jail for supporting asylum seekers. But this is about standing up for people's human rights."

That statement came from Mike Taylor, the treasurer of the National Union of Journalists in Bristol, who was due in court on Friday of this week.

Mike's "crime" was to oppose New Labour's harsh treatment of refugees in Britain.

One of his supporters is Tony Benn MP, who has written an open letter arguing why everyone should get behind Mike.

Benn says, "I would like to call on your support and solidarity in defence of trade unionist Mike Taylor."

"He is on trial for organising a protest to prevent the forced deportation of Amanj Gafor."

"Amanj's country of origin, Iraqi Kurdistan, is an intolerable place to live. People like Amanj have fled the devastating effects of harsh sanctions, factional wars and NATO's continued bombardment of Iraq."

"The protest and its repression brings into question the nature of civil rights in the UK as well as the government's 'ethical' foreign policy."

"It is a crime that people fleeing regimes, poverty and conflict are prevented from being granted asylum at the same time that borders to international markets are being removed by global institutions like the IMF, WTO and World Bank."

"I hope you will join me in defending Mike and the right to protest against human rights abuses and for the right to asylum."

Mike was arrested on 3 August last year while handing out leaflets and protesting at Heathrow airport to stop Amanj being deported to Germany.

Immigration minister Barbara Roche ruled that Amanj had to go there as it was the first country he had applied for asylum in.

Danger

But the German authorities said they intended to send Amanj to Iraq as they considered it a "safe" country.

Amanj knew his life was in danger. The Iraqi regime had executed his father for criticising Saddam Hussein.

This desperate refugee had been on the run in Europe for five years. He got into Britain in 1999, hidden in the back of a lorry bound for Dover.

Amanj was eventually arrested and moved from one detention centre to another under constant threat of deportation.

To New Labour he was a "bogus" refugee who should be deported.

To Mike and other campaigners in Bristol he was another victim of the government's crackdown on refugees.

The AEEU engineering union's shop stewards



MIKE TAYLOR

committee at Rolls-Royce Test Areas in Bristol immediately backed Amanj. They drafted a petition and got the five general secretaries of the BECTU, NUJ, FBU, MSF and GMB unions to sign it.

The MPs Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Simpson, Roger Berry and Valerie Davey also supported Amanj's case.

"But we heard that Amanj was going to be deported on 3 August so campaigners went to Heathrow," says Mike.

Whistles

"The police were waiting for us with shotguns and body armour. We came with our children and whistles."

"We were very dejected when we left the airport because we thought Amanj had been deported. Then we found out he had been secretly taken to Gatwick airport where he had resisted deportation."

"His protest caused the British Airways cabin crew to boycott the flight. Amanj was still in Britain."

The only way immigration officials could get rid of Amanj was to deport him by boat ten days later.

The 34 year old is now in a German hospital suffering from mental illness and a recent stroke.

People who mobilised for Amanj are also campaigning to defend Mike.

The TGWU and NUJ unions have joined Tony Benn MP and the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns in calling for a demonstration outside the Uxbridge court where Mike's case is to be held.

— PROTEST —
Defend Mike Taylor

Friday 6 April
10am

Uxbridge Magistrates' Court, Harefield Road, Middlesex (Uxbridge 5)

For petitions and union resolution contact Box 41, Greater Books, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB

Doctor blasts New Labour's record

'Nothing's changed for my patients'



DR KAMBIZ BOOMLA

Picture: JESS HURD

KAMBIZ BOOMLA has worked as a GP in Poplar, east London, since 1982 and is chair of the east London GPs' Local Medical Committee.

He is standing for the Socialist Alliance in the Poplar and Canning Town constituency in the forthcoming general election.

Kambiz spoke to *Socialist Worker* about the state of the health service under New Labour.

‘NEW LABOUR are actually spending a smaller proportion of Britain's wealth on health than John Major's government, according to the latest figures.

Then you have to look at exactly where the new money is being spent. It is not there in any shape or form that is visible to NHS staff and patients on the ground.

All the new money coming in is "badged". That means it's got a particular Tony Blair stamp on it.

The money is only available for things like the new NHS Direct.

But it doesn't solve the problems with the health service. It still means hospitals and GP practices are starved of resources.

Nothing has fundamentally changed for the majority of my patients.

In east London waiting lists are not going down. Until last year they were going up.

Patients are suffering huge anxiety. People get really upset, and they tend to blame whoever is nearest, which is often the GP.

Waiting for treatment has terrible consequences. Things can go drastically wrong. Proper assessments can't get made.

There are horrendous waiting lists for operations and hospital appointments in east London, especially in areas like ear, nose and throat, and

for surgery like hip replacements.

I had a patient in February who came to tell me his operation had come through for March. He thought it was this month. On closer inspection we discovered it was for March 2002.

This has happened on more than one occasion. And it is worth remembering these people aren't on the official waiting list.

Waiting

They are on the waiting list for the waiting list as you only get on the official waiting list, once you've been seen by a surgeon in the outpatients' clinic.

There are also huge waiting lists for treatments in the community like speech therapy and physiotherapy.

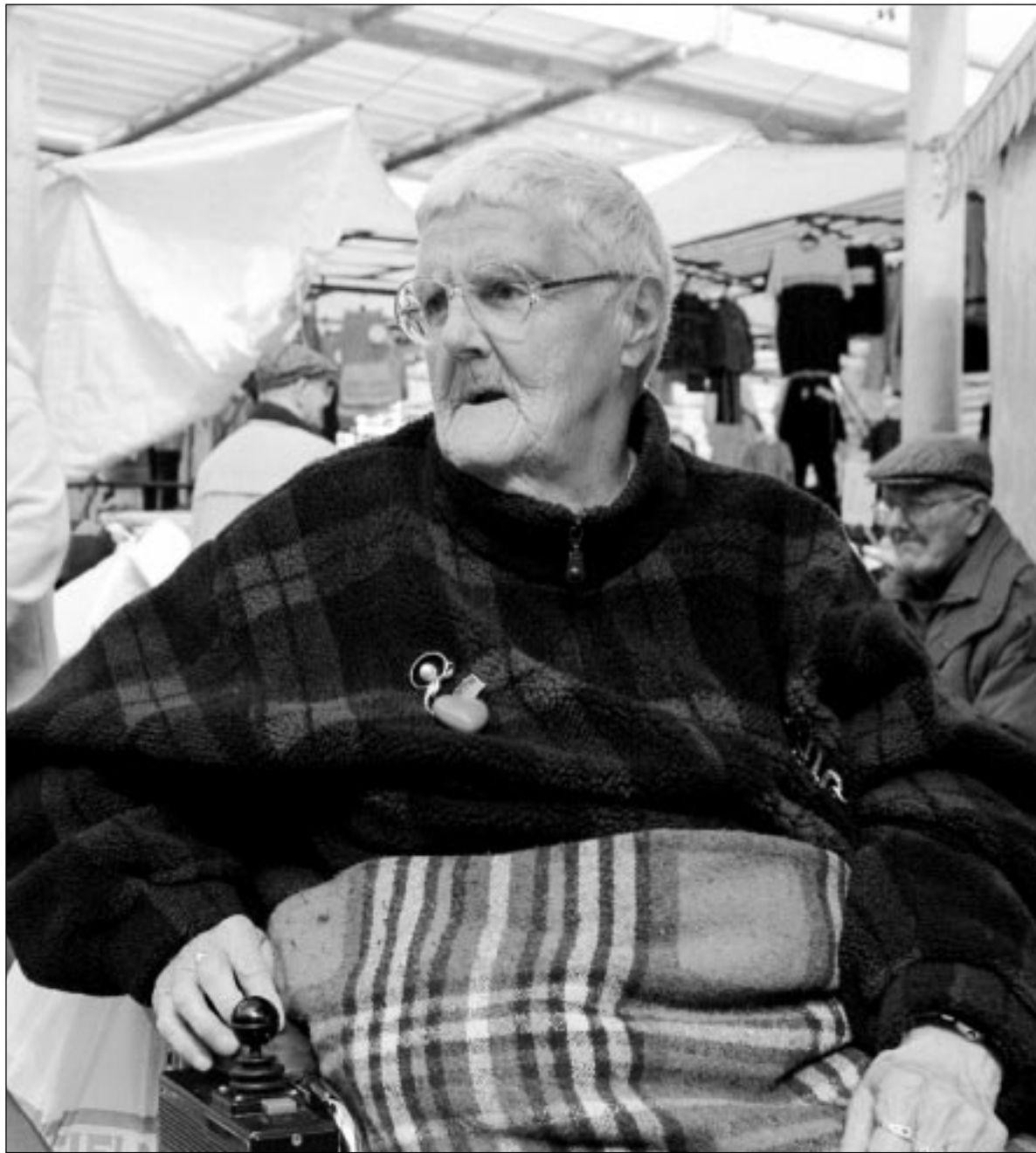
Children who need speech therapy have to wait nearly one year. Patients wait 45 weeks for physiotherapy.

"Demand management" has been introduced to try to bring down the waiting lists to meet the government's targets. This is rationing by a new name.

Physiotherapists, for example, are being asked to look through the list of conditions and decide which treatments are the least effective.

Then they are not allowed to accept referrals for anyone who needs these treatments.

Anyone who has symptoms that



Picture: JESS HURD

PEOPLE IN London's East End, like many across the country, don't get the care they need

have lasted for more than two months cannot get referred to a physiotherapist in east London.

For example, if a patient finally comes to see me with a bad knee that has caused them trouble for six months, I will try and refer them to a physiotherapist.

But my referral form comes bouncing back saying this does not meet the criteria.

Those sorts of restrictions are

creeping in throughout the health service.

So at the same time the government is making a big thing about the National Institute of Clinical Excellence being there to stop postcode prescribing, rationing is

flowing back in other areas.

In east London you can't get any form of IVF infertility treatment on the NHS. In fact treatment for infertility is off the NHS list of treatments in half the health authorities in Britain."

Keen campaign

‘THERE IS a big difference between now and a year ago when I stood for the Socialist Alliance in the Greater London Authority elections.

Now we have a Socialist Alliance supporters' group at the local Royal London Hospital. There are groups of health workers, and groups of workers from Guildhall University and Tower Hamlets College coming forward to join in the campaign.

And my patients are really keen. Many greet me with, "Got your leaflet, doctor, and I'm telling all my friends they've got to vote for you."

When I've been on the doorsteps, leafleting and doing stalls, what's really cut out of all the issues we've campaigned on, is privatisation.

Most people aren't terribly aware of the initials PFI, but everybody is very clear about what privatisation is because they've seen it on the railways."



Healthcare is a commodity

‘THE GOVERNMENT talks a lot about standards. It has used a series of scandals like the Bristol cardiac surgery case and the Shipman murder case to facilitate introducing "clinical governance".

This is where doctors and nurses are responsible for meeting quality standards.

They have introduced hospital league tables. Of course nobody wants to go to see a doctor who doesn't know how to operate.

But these tables are far too crude. None of them take into account the fact that in poorer parts of the country people are more ill and in richer parts of the country they are less ill.

Staff have to produce improvements from the same budget, out of the same resources, and that puts a far greater pressure on individual members.

That reflects itself in the high turnover of staff.

Midwives go off sick, resign, and clinics don't get covered. That results in an enormous demoralisation.

Under capitalism healthcare gets turned into a commodity.

If you don't get better or if something goes wrong then you have a legal remedy—like suing for malpractice—in the same way you would if your washing machine wasn't working.

Stealth

That goes completely against the ethos of the National Health Service when it was originally set up.

But it will happen more and more, especially when you see how in areas like care for the elderly the government is constantly trying to put personal care into the private sector.

The Tory privatisation by stealth through the Private Finance Initiative has been brought in with increased speed under New Labour.

So no sooner does the government money go in than it goes out again to pay the private contractors' profits."

HEART OF THE MATTER

‘THE MAJOR factor behind so much of the illness I see is poverty, bad housing and unemployment. The government has done nothing to systematically tackle it.

The heart attack rate for people under the age of 75 in east London is twice the national average.

Housing is one of the biggest problems. Some of my patients live in flats with no carpets and no furniture.

A lot of the housing stock in east London was built during the 1960s and 70s, just as quality standards were relaxed. The housing is substandard, with too thin walls and inadequate insulation.

So you get damp, condensation and mould growing on the walls.

I also see an enormous amount of overcrowding on my rounds.

You can still walk into bedrooms where there are two or three double beds in a bedroom with no floor space.

Councils don't make available a sufficient number of houses that deal with the larger families that some of our Bengali patients have.

We've got a mass epidemic of asthma in east London. One in three children have some form of asthma, a phenomenal amount. It's created by a combination of condensation, fungus, and mould and traffic pollution.

My Bengali patients tell me when they go back to Bengal the asthma goes. There is a clear correlation with bad housing."



what socialists say

Socialists and the Greens

‘BRITAIN under Labour is more unequal. The rich have become richer, the poor poorer. We demand higher taxes for top earners. We demand economic justice.'

The quote is from Mike Woodin, principal speaker of the Green Party, at its recent conference in Chesterfield.

At the election the Greens will be appealing to people disillusioned with New Labour and wanting a far more radical alternative.

The party's manifesto echoes many of the themes the Socialist Alliance will be campaigning around.

It has produced an excellent election campaigning briefing titled "Global Justice, Not Globalisation", which echoes the feelings seen in the anti-capitalist protests since Seattle.

I spoke to Caroline Lucas, Green MEP and one of the best of the radical figures within the Green Party, at the conference.

"People stereotype Greens as only being about the environment," she argued. "Our policies are about sustainable development, and at the heart of that are economic policies, social justice."

When party speakers talk about environmental issues they usually do so in a way that connects them with wider social questions.

So Mike Woodin rightly argued, 'It's the poor who are more likely to see their child killed on the roads. It's the poor who live near the incinerators and the toxic factories.'

But the Green Party is more complex, and contradictory, than its manifesto and statements from key figures suggest.

At the conference it struck me that only a

minority of people were genuinely enthusiastic about the radical stance embodied in the manifesto.

Among these were the Greens who have been actively involved in protests and with groupings such as Globalise Resistance.

But there were other currents obvious at the conference too.

Many of the discussions seemed disconnected from many current concerns and struggles.

The genuine passion and concern about social injustice sometimes came across as though it was about people and issues that were a little removed from delegates' daily experience.

'Real'

Some at the conference were also much more focused on "parish council level" local issues rather than wider social questions. Many of these are existing local Green councillors.

There was also another important minority at the conference, people who had an almost New Labour style elitism and an obsession with "getting real".

In debates some of these, while careful not to challenge many of the radical manifesto themes head on, struck very New Labour style poses—such as defending selection in education for instance.

It felt like given half a chance some of these people would sacrifice radical or left wing policies in order to get elected and work within the existing system.

They would rapidly tread the path beaten by people like German Green leader and government minister Joschka Fischer, from radical protester to supporter of NATO bombing and defender of nuclear waste transport.

Other activists and some

leading figures in the Greens have far better principles, and in private were scathing against people like Joschka Fisher.

These divisions can only grow the more successful the party is in elections.

What should the attitude of socialists be?

Whenever Greens campaign on the kind of themes and issues highlighted in their manifesto we should enthusiastically work with and alongside them.

And in areas where no socialist candidate is standing at the election and Green candidates take up such themes we should vote for them.

But the Greens are NOT an alternative to the Socialist Alliance or socialist organisation in general.

The contradictions within the Green Party stem from a deep-rooted lack of clarity about the nature of the capitalist society which is the source of the social and environmental problems we face.

Elitist

The Greens also have no focus on building a mass movement based on ordinary people changing the world from below.

Instead the party is deeply elitist in a very specific but important sense.

Everyone at the conference, even the best people, focused on elections and winning office as the only way to deliver change.

There was no sense of the working class movement, and little notion of building mass struggle and protest, or even of building a mass Green Party.

For a force which looks to both present an electoral challenge to New Labour and also build a mass movement to challenge capitalism, you need not Green but socialist organisation.

by PAUL McGARR

Socialist Review

FOUR YEARS HARD LABOUR

- Liz Davies on why I left the party
- What would Labour's second term be like?
- The war on the poor

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20 YEARS AFTER BRIXTON RIOTS

Uprising sparked a wave of revolt

by KEVIN OVENDEN

THE FLAMES rose above Brixton, home to one of the largest black communities in London, for two nights on 10-11 April 1981.

Police struggled to crush the uprising against their own racist brutality and against poverty.

Over 7,000 police officers, a third of the Metropolitan force, did eventually regain control. But Brixton rose again at the beginning of July 1981 alongside young people in inner cities across Britain.

The first Brixton riot was the most severe urban disorder in post-war British history up to that point.

It terrified Margaret Thatcher's deeply unpopular government and the wider establishment.

It inspired a spirit of resistance to police thugs in inner city areas which continues to this day.

And it struck a powerful blow for unity between black and white working class people.

Racism from the police triggered the Brixton riot and those that followed in the summer of 1981. But it was not a "race riot"—a war of white against black. It was a class riot of the poor and dispossessed.

The police launched a massive operation in Brixton four days before the riot.

They poured in 100 extra plainclothes officers as part of "Operation Swamp 81".

At the same time they were refusing to seriously investigate a fire in Deptford, a few miles away, which had killed 13 young black people three months before.

IN FOUR days the police in Brixton stopped 943 people and arrested 118, over half of them black.

Then on Friday evening, 10 April, the police bundled Michael Bailey, a 19 year old black man who was bleeding from a stab wound, into a police car.

No ambulance was called. A crowd gathered.

The police car did not move. So people freed him and the police attacked them. Running battles continued for hours.

Plainclothes and uniformed police stepped up the repression the following day. They arrested a 28 year old black man who was waving at a friend in Atlantic Road.

"Black and white people went over to try and help, but in the end six policemen threw him in a van," said an eyewitness.

"By now everyone was angry."

Police steamed into the crowds of Satur-

BRIXTON, 1981: a community against the police

day shoppers. That's when the battle started. Years of burning anger poured out.

Afro-Caribbean people were just 6 percent of London's population. They accounted for 44 percent of those arrested under the "sus" stop and search law in the late 1970s.

Unemployment was soaring and the official figure was to reach three million (an underestimate) in the summer of 1981.

Young people were hardest hit, and black young people especially so.

Some 55 percent of black men under the age of 19 in Brixton were officially unemployed.

Twelve months earlier 2,000 people—two thirds black, one third white—had rioted in St Pauls, Bristol, after a police raid on a club.

Now people in Brixton fought back too.

They turned burnt out police vans into barricades. Police came under fire from petrol bombs on Leeson Road, the first time they were widely used in Britain.

The press spoke of mindless violence. It was anything but.

Some 61 police vehicles were damaged or destroyed, as against only 19 private vehicles.

THE WINDSOR Castle pub went up in flames—people had complained for years about its racist door policy.

A bus was hijacked and driven at the police. Scores of shops were looted. Other buildings such as the community-based Social Action Centre were left alone.

Scarlet Macguire, a journalist for the IRN news agency, reported, "Everyone I spoke to lived within three or four blocks of where I was at the time. There was organisation.

"All the people I spoke to were politically aware. They hated the way they were treated, the way the police have provoked and harassed them for years.

"This wasn't a race riot. It was really cut and dried. It was the community against the police."

Socialist Worker reported, "In the High Street a skinhead was standing in an off-licence window handing out six packs to a group of Rastas.

"A middle aged white woman was knocked off balance by a young Rasta as he ran down the road.

"He picked her up, dusted her down and apologised. Both went on their way smiling."

The police did not regain control until late the following afternoon, when they began their retribution. Arrests and raids soared over the next few weeks.

But Brixton had touched off a wider sense of revolt. There were several minor clashes with the police in other areas within weeks.

They included a demonstration of skinheads in Sheffield, who ended up charging through the streets shouting, "Brixton, Brixton!"

Then on 3 July police racism triggered

riots in Southall, west London, and in Toxteth, Liverpool.

They spread over the next seven days to Moss Side in Manchester, Leicester, Handsworth in Birmingham, Brixton, Leeds, Bolton and scores of other places.

Toxteth and Moss Side were on the scale of Brixton three months earlier.

Liverpool's black population was concentrated in Toxteth. Defending the rioters a few days later a rail union activist from Toxteth said:

"I saw police beating shields and saying, 'Come on out.'

"I was proud to see people come out. They had seven police forces at a standstill.

"Sixty percent of the rioters were white but all the generals were black, and that's the first army in this country formed on that basis."

A 1,500-strong group of black and white youth in Moss Side attacked a police station and fought back police who were driving around in vans shouting racist abuse.

LUTON WAS typical of the smaller "copycat riots". Eye-witnesses reported, "Black and white youth began by attacking the racists, and then moved on to attack the police and the Tory party HQ."

In Halifax there was "a right good mix of skinheads and Asian youth".

White anti-racists had united with black and Asian people to defend areas from the Nazi National Front and the police throughout the 1970s.

The Anti Nazi League had built large mobilisations of black and white people, which isolated hardcore racists.

But white youth who were actively anti-racist were a minority.

The 1981 riots drew the mass of white youth to identify with black people who were at the sharp end of police violence and Thatcher's savage attack on working class people.

Unity was key

THE MOST striking thing about Brixton, St Pauls, Toxteth and Moss Side was the odd mixture of ferocity with a carnival atmosphere. There was no violence between the rioters, racial or otherwise.

Throughout the late 1970s most gangs of youth were split along racial lines. Yet 40 percent of those arrested in Brixton were white.

Black youth turned up to the defence campaign meetings with white friends. They could not understand arguments that we should split the defence campaign along racial lines.

I remember clearly watching clips from the Brixton riot in a largely white club in Harlesden, west London. People cheered when they saw the police retreating.

The riots lasted at most two or three nights in each case. Of course the authorities could reassert control. The riots were not going to bring down the government or the system as a whole.

But they did force the authorities to at least pay lip service to the alienation of young black people.

They were key to winning equal opportunities policies, even if it was largely a token.

The biggest gain, however, was in creating a sense of unity.

Racism remains, of course. But we turned a corner in 1981. ●**BRUCE GEORGE, active in the Brixton defence campaign**

INSPIRING FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

THATCHER WAS due to speak at the Welsh Tory conference in July 1980, in Swansea. The Right to Work Campaign called for a picket of the conference.

As the march came through the town, an organised group of around 70 skinheads gathered on the route but didn't join the march.

When police came to move them on, they started chanting, "Niggers rule in Bristol!" at the police.

Right to Work stewards went to the skinheads and addressed them on the megaphone, saying, "We don't call black people 'niggers', because that is racist and disrespectful.

"We respect them because they beat the police in St Pauls, Bristol."

This was met with a tremendous cheer of support from the skinheads.

●**JON FLAIG, part of the Right to Work Campaign in South Wales**

in my view

Well versed in imperialism

ONE OF the insults levelled at the left is that we "politicise" everything.

Good honest businessmen are getting the railways to work when horrible lefties bang on about "profits before safety".

In the field of culture they say we've wrecked the arts with political correctness. Kenneth Clarke was once a minister of education and announced that his education policy would be free of dogma.

The *Daily Mail* abuses children's books that tackle social issues with headlines about the innocence of childhood being wrecked. Oh, bring back the good old days, they all say, when art was art and politics was politics.

You can only get away with this if you have short memories and short sight. New Labour's struggle to impose a capitalist plan for London Underground has stripped away any pretence that economics and politics are different.

Ideology and dogma don't get much clearer, and as I was doing a bit of teaching this week I came across a book that made me think the same.

Island race?

The name Sir Henry Newbolt may not mean much to you, but if you were at school between 1895 and 1950 you would know him well. Through these years, millions of British kids chanted his poetry and memorised it for life.

So, unlike the horrid ideological stuff of today, Newbolt's stuff, we might presume, must be well nigh non-political?

Well, er...not exactly. Unless there's no politics in saying that "faith in all the Island Race" gets us "storming the Afghan mountain-track" as part of "the sweep and splendour of England's war".

Island race? Doesn't that ring a bell? Tory MPs making up fairy stories about a "homogenous Anglo-Saxon culture", perhaps? OK to kill Afghans over there, but godammit, we can't have them living here.

Again and again his poems glory in battle and slaughter: "With never a foot lagging or head bent, to the clash and clamour and dust of death they went."

Many of the kids who read that marched off to die in the mud in France in 1916. Elsewhere we read that we English have got "a kingdom none can take" while we bash up Spaniards, French and Dutchmen.

Non-dogmatic flourish

And our Sir Henry isn't shy about explaining why all this slaughter is necessary. Our ships are "laden with the spoil of the South", and we raise a tankard "for promised lands of gold".

Because, remember, O Lord Almighty, we are "the race that strove to rule Thine earth". In fact, we know you so well, eh god? We know that "Thou wilt not turn Thy face away from those who work Thy will." (God is the British Empire's number one fan.)

And what happens when the natives rise up? Well, one Mehtab Singh who threatens British rule with mutiny is, of course, "proud and sly", so he gets lectured to by a Captain Nicholson: "Have ye served us for a hundred years, and yet ye know not why? We brook no doubt of our mastery, we rule until we die."

And with a distinctly non-dogmatic flourish to Mehtab, our captain signs off with, "When the strong command, obedience is best."

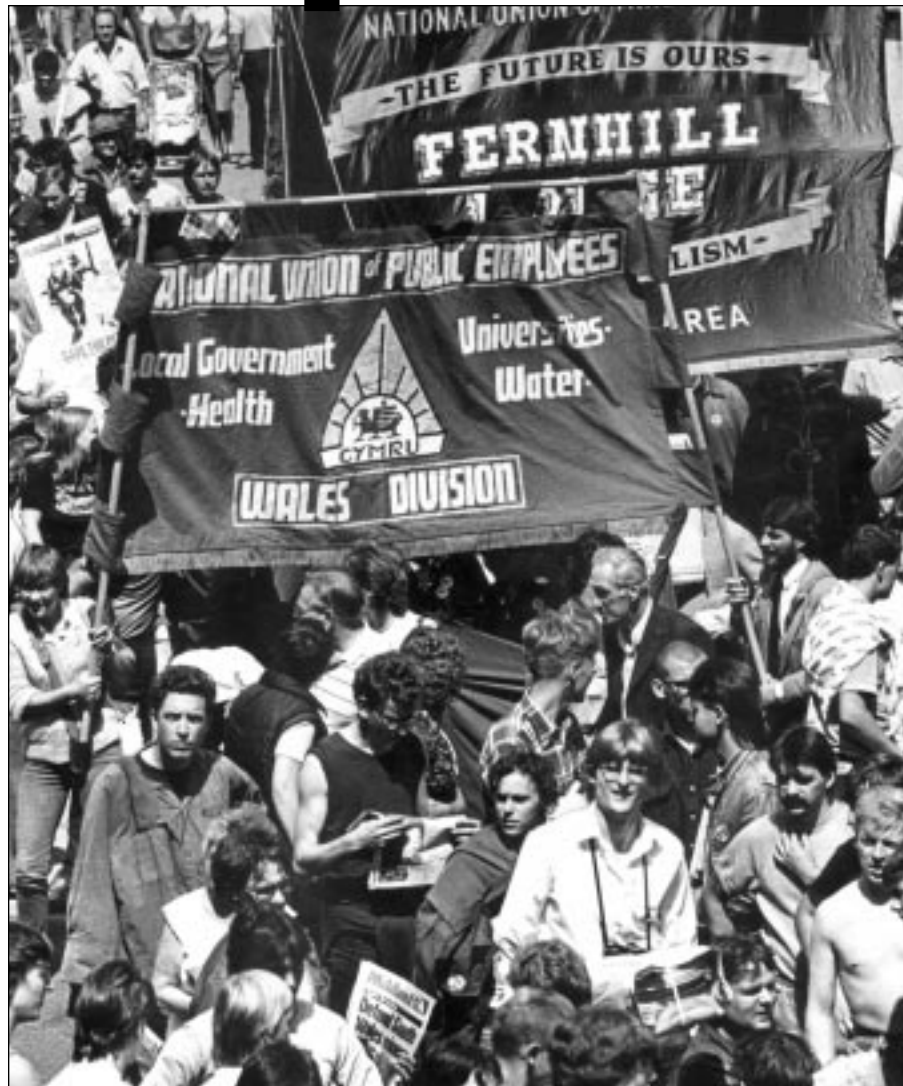
After a career of writing this stuff there was one job left for Henry. Just before his death (not on the battlefield, I hasten to add) he was appointed chairman of the Newbolt report on "the teaching of English in England".

A very non-political appointment, I'd say.

by MIKE ROSEN

book

Fun memories of protesting



THOUSANDS MARCHED in support of striking miners

film

THIS IS NO BLACK AND WHITE SHOW

SPIKE LEE'S latest and most controversial film, *Bamboozled*, gives us an insight into the murky world of the US television industry.

Bamboozled shows cut-throat networks motivated only by the drive to increase audience ratings and make money. Under pressure, one TV network demands a hard-hitting show from the streets.

In response, *Mantan—The New Millennium Minstrel Show* is created.

The programme's black creator uses the extreme racism of the minstrel show to prove the industry is only interested in stereotypes of black people as uneducated, lazy and ignorant characters.

The show's maker is trying to fight against the system that treats his people like this, but does his show help to challenge it?

Bamboozled asks loads of questions—can you be successful in the media and stand up for what you believe in? How

by KERRI PARKE

do you get your message across in the media?

Lee's film is deliberately shocking and uncomfortable viewing.

He wanted this movie to provoke a debate about how black people are treated in society and portrayed in the media. He has succeeded.

Bridge

While there is no minstrel show on TV now, what has really changed?

Black people are still treated differently and are put on TV only if the powers that be think it appropriate.

There is a definite feeling of disappointment as you discover that Lee is only interested in race issues and completely ignores the question of class.

However, he does raise the very important point that this part of history must never be forgotten.

While this film doesn't answer the questions that it raises nearly as much as I hoped, it might begin to bridge the gap between Hollywood and anti-racist politics.

Lee has been brave enough to create a film that is equally on the edge, controversial and shockingly funny, and one that definitely makes you think.

preview

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY (Sun, 9pm, ITV). First in a two-part adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FOOD? (Sun, 11.15pm,

ITV) Documentary on farming methods in Britain.

UNDER FIRE (Sun, 12 midnight, ITV). Three journalists go in search of a Sandinista leader in revolutionary Nicaragua in this 1983 film.

Tony Cliff and the fight for international socialism

A meeting to launch Volume One of Cliff's Selected Writings

TUESDAY 10 APRIL, 6.30PM

Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, Bloomsbury, London WC2H

IN 1975 unemployment was rising, the unions had a "Social Contract" with the Labour government to cut pay and stop strikes, Ricky Tomlinson was in jail for being a militant building worker, and Mark Steel bought a copy of the *Morning Star*.

It wasn't long before he recognised that Russia wasn't socialist and joined the Socialist Workers Party. Thank god for that!

Mark Steel's new book, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, offers reminiscences of the countless highs and lows of fighting the bosses and Thatcherism through the eyes of working class people.

It works as an easy to read activist's handbook, and as a guide to building class struggle and political organisation.

Mark's political life began by eating a banana in the school corridor as an act of defiance, and careered on to standing as a Socialist Alliance candidate in the Greater London Assembly elections last year.

Through the period of working class defeats against Thatcher and the 1980s bosses' offensive Mark charts the upside, the funny side and the successes.

His life as a comedian gets less attention than his experiences as a flying picket, as an unemployed protester on the Right to Work march, calling a rent strike on his council estate, and organising solidarity for the Great Miners' Strike.

There are lows as well as highs, and touching emotion when writing of the mistreatment of his dad's illness by an uncaring system.

The big message is that people who consider protests are pointless should think how much nicer a day the cabinet minister would have if we weren't in there having a go.

Mark also shows how many successes we've

by TONY STAUNTON, Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate for Plymouth Devonport

had—the collective smashing of the fascists here in the late 70s, or the swift rise of organised international opposition to the Gulf War. For Mark, the best reason to organise an anti-war movement is to preserve your own sanity.

As this book reveals, Blair didn't scrap the

poll tax—we did. Blair didn't release Nelson Mandela—international political solidarity by socialist activists did.

The welfare state is still around because of all the community and trade union campaigns that collectively fought

back across those 25 years.

Mark writes, "How can you chant, 'Maggie! Maggie! Out! Out! Out!' for 11 years and not feel delighted when she is finally gone?" Look—we did that!

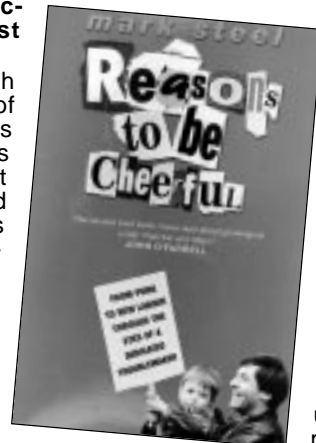
This book screams against complacency, exposes political posturing and pessimism, and is nowhere more passionate than about the injustice of the Irish border.

Through these pages we are with the international working class always, against the world's boss class always, and trying all the time to understand more while not oppressing each other in our personal lives. Not bad!

Mark finishes with the Seattle protests and the rise of global resistance to capitalism. It is a serious, funny book of reasons to be cheerful.

Today the opportunities are enormous. For those of us who have gone through the fights of the 70s, 80s and 90s, 2001 is just what we've been waiting for. Thanks for the memories, Mark.

■Mark Steel will launch *Reasons to be Cheerful* on Monday 9 April at 6.30pm at Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1. Copies of the book are available for £10.



where
we
stand

INDEPENDENT
WORKING CLASS
ACTION

The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT
REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO
PARLIAMENTARY
ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE
REVOLUTIONARY
PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

THE DELAY in the election provides a fantastic opportunity to deepen and extend the socialist campaign over the coming weeks.

The Socialist Alliance is now holding weekly constituency meetings (see below).

Every *Socialist Worker* reader should make every effort to go along to their local meeting and take people they know with them.

The meeting needs to become the place in each area where all those disillusioned with New Labour gather to discuss and organise the socialist campaign.

People are finding that the meetings are more successful where they combine interesting discussion with organising the campaign.

Dave Franklin is Socialist Alliance election agent in Streatham in south London.

"Until a week ago we were meeting jointly with the neighbouring constituency of Vauxhall," he explains. "At the last joint meeting there were only around half a dozen people from Streatham, and most were old faces that I recognised.

"We decide to split and push things wider in Streatham, to pull in new people. We mailed out everyone we knew and phoned round. We also invited speakers. We wanted the meeting to be both political and practical.

"At the first meeting we had someone speak from the Greater London Pensioners Association and another from a local education campaign.

"The meeting was great. Firstly it was bigger, around 20 for just our constituency, and with some new faces. There were also a load of apologies on top, from people who

really wanted to come but couldn't make it that week. There was also more real debate.

"After discussing the local education campaign the alliance was out with them petitioning on Saturday. The discussion and activity fed each other.

Imaginative

"We will be discussing broader issues too. So this week we are inviting someone from Globalise Resistance to talk about that and building the Genoa demonstration in July."

The meetings need to be used to keep the socialist election campaign going. That means continuing the leafleting, but also much more. Imaginative street protests and street theatre can get the socialist message across and win a wider audience.

VOTE SOCIALIST

How to get active

SOCIALIST candidates will be standing in constituencies across England, Scotland and Wales at the general election. Some of those where a decision to stand has already been taken are listed here, along with details of the candidate and the weekly constituency meetings.

ALDRIDGE-BROWNHILLS

John Rothery

ASHFIELD

George Watson
Thu, 7.30pm, Waggon & Horses,
Chapel St, Kirkby Cross
☎ 01773 836 677

BARNSELY CENTRAL

Henry Rajch
Wed, 8pm, Victoria Inn, Sheffield Rd

BASILDON

Dick Duane
Tue, 7pm, Pitsea Leisure Centre,
Pitsea Mkt

BIRMINGHAM ERDINGTON

Steve Godward

BIRMINGHAM NORTHFIELD

Clive Walder

BIRMINGHAM PERRY BARR

Caroline Johnson

BIRMINGHAM SPARKBROOK

BLACKBURN

Jim Nichol

BOOTLE

Pete Glover

BRADFORD SOUTH

Ateeq Siddique
Wed, 7.30pm, West Bowling

Youth Initiative, Parkside Rd
☎ 07966 416 007

BRENTFORD & ISLEWORTH

Danny Faith
Wed, 7.30pm, Isleworth Public
Hall, South St ☎ 07958 996 777

BRENT SOUTH

Mick McDonnell
Thu, 7.30pm, Brent Trades Hall,
379-381 High Rd, Willesden
☎ 07940 510 906

BRISTOL EAST

Andy Pryor

BRISTOL SOUTH

Brian Drummond
Wed, 7pm, Filwood Community
Centre, Knowle West

CAMBRIDGE

Howard Senter
Tue, 7.30pm, CB2, Norfolk St
☎ 07968 940 777

CARDIFF CENTRAL

Julian Goss
Wed, 5.30pm, Oddfellows,
Pitsea Mkt

CARDIFF SOUTH & PENARTH

Dave Bartlett

CARLISLE

Paul Wilcox
Tue, 7.30pm, Postworkers Club,
Lonsdale St ☎ 07808 422 304

CHESTERFIELD

Jeannie Robinson
Thu, 8pm, Assembly Rms, Market
Halls, Market Sq ☎ 07778 480 484

COVENTRY NORTH EAST

Dave Nellist

COVENTRY SOUTH

Rob Windsor

CRAWLEY

Muriel Hirsch
Wed, 8pm, Three Bridges
Community Centre
☎ 07941 117 874

CROYDON NORTH

Don Madgwick
Thursday, 8pm, Ruskin Hse, cnr
Coombe Rd/Park Rd

DAGENHAM

Berlyne Hamilton
Wed, 7.30pm, Dagenham Parish
Church Minor Hall, Church Lane
☎ 07958 508 492

DARLINGTON

Alan Docherty

DONCASTER CENTRAL

Janet Terry

DUDLEY SOUTH

Angela Thompson
Thu, 7.30pm, Pensnett Social &
Welfare Club, Commonsides
☎ 07759 809 348

DULWICH & WEST NORWOOD

EALING, ACTON & SHEPHERD'S BUSH

Nick Grant
Thu, 7.30pm, West London Trade
Union Club, Acton High St
☎ 07718 352 589

EDMONTON

Howard Medwell
Thu, 7.30pm, UK Ethnic Minority
Partnership, Edmonton Green
Shopping Centre

EXETER

Fran Choules
Mon, 7.30pm, Exeter Community
Centre, St David's Hill
☎ 07939 558 115

GREENWICH & WOOLWICH



Kirstie Paton

Wed, 7.30pm, Charlton Hse,
Hornfair Rd, Charlton

GILLINGHAM

Wynford Vaughan Thomas

HACKNEY SOUTH & SHOREDITCH

Cecilia Prosper
Thu, 8pm, Dalston Methodist
Centre, Richmond Rd
☎ 07946 380 370

HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE

HARLOW

John Hobbs

HOLBORN & ST PANCRAS

Candy Udwin
Thu, 8pm, Coopers Lane TA,
Purchase St, Somers Town
☎ 07904 268 178

HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN

Louise Christian
Thu, 8pm, Hornsey Vale
Community Centre, Mayfield Rd
☎ 07801 789 297

HOVE

Andy Richards
Thu, 8.30pm, Vallance Community
Centre, Conway Ct, cnr Sackville
Rd/Clairemont Rd ☎ 07940 929 565

HUDDERSFIELD CENTRAL

Graham Hellawell
Tue, 7pm, Huddersfield Town Hall
☎ 01484 324 739

HULL NORTH

Roger Smith
Wed, 7.30pm, White Lion, Central
Bus Stn ☎ 0831 396 895

IPSWICH

Peter Leech
Tue, 7.45pm, Salutation, Carr St

ISLINGTON SOUTH

Janine Booth
Mon, 6.30pm, Islington
Pensioners Forum, Provence Pl
☎ 07930 454 271

LEEDS CENTRAL

Steve Johnston
Tue, 7pm, Adelphi, Hunslet Rd
☎ 07887 723 328

LEICESTER WEST

Steve Score

LEWISHAM DEPTFORD

Ian Page
Thu, 7.45pm, Crown & Sceptre,
cnr Friendly St/Cranbrook Rd
☎ 07741 004 950

LEWISHAM EAST

Jean Kysow
Thu, 7.30pm, St Mary's Centre,
Ladywell Rd

LEYTON & WANSTEAD

Sally Labern
Thu, 7.30pm, Trinity Church Hall,
cnr St Mary's Rd/Leyton High Rd
☎ 07973 251 984

LIVERPOOL RIVERSIDE

Cathy Wilson
Thu, 7pm, Flying Picket, Hardman
St ☎ 07812 467 714

LIVERPOOL WAVERTREE

Mark O'Brien
Thu, 7.30pm, Vaux Cattle Mkt,
Prescott Rd ☎ 07947 645 289

LUTON SOUTH

Joe Hearne
Sun, 2pm, Postel Club, cnr
Cardiff Rd/Dunstable Rd
☎ 07941 861 762

MAKERFIELD

Malcolm Jones

MANCHESTER BLACKLEY

Karen Reissmann

Mon, 7.30pm, Rm A1, Abraham
Moss Centre ☎ 0161 795 5468

MANCHESTER WITHINGTON

John Clegg
Wed, 7.30pm, Withington
Community Centre
☎ 0161 861 8390

MIDDLESBROUGH

Geoff Kerr Morgan

MILTON KEYNES SOUTH WEST

NORTHAMPTON NORTH

Gordon Wright
Mon, 7.30pm, Vocal &
Instrumental Club, Bailiff St
☎ 07941 861 762

NORWICH SOUTH

Dave Manningham
Sun, 5pm, Russell St Community
Centre ☎ 07808 988 320

NOTTINGHAM EAST

Pete Radcliff
Mon, 7.30pm, International
Community Centre, Mansfield Rd

OXFORD EAST

John Lister
Thu, 7pm, Oxford Town Hall, St
Aldates ☎ 07929 618 579

PECKHAM & CAMBERWELL

John Mulrenan
Mon, 7.30pm, Walworth
Methodist Centre, Camberwell
Rd ☎ 07941 488 925

PLYMOUTH DEVONPORT

Tony Staunton
Wed, 7.30pm, Ballard Activity
Centre, The Crescent
☎ 07803 620 390

PONTEFRAC & CASTLEFORD

John Gill

POPLAR & CANNING TOWN

Kambiz Boomla
Thu, 8pm, Langdon Pk
Community Centre, Byron St
☎ 07939 951 376

PORTSMOUTH SOUTH

John Molyneux
Wed, 8pm, Southsea
Community Centre, King St
☎ 07801 290 411

READING EAST

Darren Williams

REGENTS PARK & NORTH

KENSINGTON
China Miéville
Wed, 7pm, Tabernacle, Powis Sq,
Notting Hill ☎ 07946 349 002

ROTHERHAM

Freda Smith

SALFORD

Peter Grant
Tue, 8pm, Broadwalk Library,
Salford Precinct ☎ 07950 486 859

SHEFFIELD BRIGHTSIDE

Brian Wilson
Tue, 7pm, Trade Base (old
library), Firth Park Rd
☎ 07733 012 993

The extra weeks before the election mean more opportunities to systematically visit local union branches and community groups, and raise support and money.

Door to door canvassing is another good way to find people wanting to join the socialist campaign and get involved.

And the local Socialist Alliance needs to work alongside others to build around wider issues and protests in every area, from campaigns over education and council housing to building for Genoa.

Within all this we also want *Socialist Worker* to become the paper where you can follow the debates and read the reports on the campaign.

So make sure that you send us your reports, and that as many people as possible in your local socialist campaign get *Socialist Worker* each week too.

SHEFFIELD CENTRAL

Nick Riley

SOUTHAMPTON ITCHEN

Gavin Marsh

SOUTHAMPTON TEST

Mark Abel
Thu, 8.30pm, Shirley &
Freemantle Community Centre,
Randolph St ☎ 07811 210 036

STREATHAM

Greg Tucker
Wed, 7.30pm, Bedford Pk Hotel,
Streatham High Rd
☎ 07703 131 206

STEVENAGE

Steve Glennon

STOCKTON SOUTH

Lawrie Coombes

SWANSEA WEST

Alec Thraves

TELFORD

Mike Jeffries
Tue, 7.30pm, Dun Cow Annexe,
New St, Dawley ☎ 07866 220 305

TORFAEN

Steve Bell

TOTTENHAM

Weyman Bennett
Mon, 7.30pm, Botany Bay, Phillip
Lane ☎ 07808 612 454

TYNEBRIDGE

Terry Rodgers

TYNESIDE NORTH

Pete Burnett

VAUXHALL

Theresa Bennett
Mon, 7.30pm, Grosvenor, Sidney
Rd ☎ 07796 304 546

WAKEFIELD

Mick Griffiths
Thu, 7.30pm, Black Rock, Bullring

WALSALL NORTH

Dave Church
Wed, 7.30pm, Victoria, Lower
Rushall St ☎ 07941 834 125

WALSALL SOUTH

Peter Smith

WARWICK & LEAMINGTON

WATFORD

Jon Berry
Mon, 7.30pm, South Herts Sports
Club, Royal Rd ☎ 0802 890 331

WAVENEY

Rupert Mallin
Thu, 8pm, Havelock, Love Rd,
Lowestoft ☎ 07779 161 672

WIGAN

Dave Lowe

YORK

Frank Ormston
Wed, 8pm, Denham Suite, Priory
St Centre, off Micklegate
☎ 07950 931 617

To get involved phone the
National Network
of Socialist Alliances on
020 7536 9696

The Scottish Socialist Party
plans to stand in all 72
constituencies in Scotland.
Get involved—
phone 0141 221 7714

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
To join the Socialist Workers Party,
fill in this form and send it to:
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Name

Address

.....

.....

Trade union..... Phone

Fax 020 7538 0140

E-mail letters@socialistworker.co.uk

or send to

letters

PO Box 82 London E3 3LH

Boeing's plan hits opposition

BOEING, THE world's largest military aircraft manufacturer, has linked up with Sheffield University to set up a £15 million Aerospace Manufacturing and Research Centre on a disused open-cast mine.

Boeing is heavily involved with the US's controversial National Missile Defence programme. The programme cannot go ahead without cooperation from Britain.

Flyingdales radar base in North Yorkshire will be required to be upgraded (by Boeing) and be used to search for and identify missiles.

An action group has been set up to publicise and protest against Boeing's involvement with our university.

It involves members of CND, and People and Planet as well as a number of concerned individuals. Weekly stalls and petitions have been successful and we plan a big protest in the near future.

□LISA TUNNELL, Sheffield University student

Union key to jobs

FROM SEPTEMBER all Ericsson mobile phone production in Britain will cease. Both my Carlton-in-Lindrick factory in Nottinghamshire and the Scunthorpe factories will close, leading to the loss of 1,200 jobs.

As if to add insult to injury, word had already spread round our factory well before we were officially told. Why did we have to wait to hear what had already become common knowledge via the media?

The north Nottinghamshire area has high unemployment following the wave of pit closures from 1984 to 1991.

In the past year we have seen jobs lost in Worksop at Coultards, Coats Viyella and other major local employers. It all seems pretty bleak.

Several attempts have been made to unionise Ericsson's since 1998, but with very limited success. We must fight to save our jobs, and the starting point is that we must get a union established. Quickly.

□ERICSSON EMPLOYEE, Carlton-in-Lindrick

LESSON IN VOTE

THE RESULT of the recent ballot on Scottish teachers' pay and conditions, where 80 percent accepted the deal, was disappointing.

But now the elections for the national executive for the EIS teachers' union show Scottish teachers are not removed from the mood for change.

The socialist candidate for the national presidency got 40 percent of the vote, and other left candidates were elected in higher numbers than before.

The most successful election results for the left in recent years are a shift that should be built upon during the coming months.

□LESLEY ATKINS, Glasgow

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Striking blow against sexism

THOUSANDS of postal workers in Scotland are feeling proud this week that we did the right thing by striking against bullying and sexism.

We walked out of Glasgow's main post depot when a male manager was given what we felt was a lenient punishment for making sexual remarks to a 16 year old woman worker.

He had been suspended after the incident but came back last week with only a two-year warning, the kind of thing we get for nipping out to have a fag. The woman was upset when the manager came back—so were the rest of us.

About 20 walked to start with, then another 100 or so. By Monday night of last week there were picket lines up, the night shift stopped and the strike was solid.

When management tried to get our mail sorted elsewhere, other workers across Scotland walked out—in Edinburgh, Perth, Ayrshire, Lanarkshire. In all somewhere between 4,500 and 7,000 of us were out.



UNITED AGAINST sexism—mass meeting of postal workers

Our union leaders told us to go back to work because of the laws. In the end they managed to persuade a majority at a mass meeting to agree to go back, but only by promising a fast track official ballot on action.

The manager has now gone sick. Feelings are running high on the issue.

We won't stand for managers harassing people and treating women workers in this way. Our strike has raised this in a far more effective way than all the "official" procedures. We did the right thing by striking, and if need be there'll be more action.

□POSTAL WORKER, Glasgow

PPP is Blair's real slogan

EVEN THE Tories in London have announced they are against the PPP public-private partnership for the tube. It is highly ironic that the architects of mass privatisation, the Tories, should realise how unpopular privatisation is way before New Labour.

In Manchester privatisation at South Manchester Hospital has meant that the private company that built the new section has been given the entire hospital.

Rents

The private company now rents it back to the NHS at a massive profit. Also in Manchester the private sector is being brought into every area of public services.

Serco is a multinational that boasts of its massive profits from privatised industries.

The company now controls swimming baths, the metro and much more here in Manchester.

Tony Blair said he was about education, education, education. What he really meant was he was about PPP—privatisation, privatisation, privatisation.

□M SWINDELLS, Manchester

Better still, we are now getting a brand new health centre built with the extra GPs and health facilities we have long insisted are needed for our estate.

Our victory proves that direct action works, and that if you fight back you can win.

□SUE GIBSON, East London

A clinical victory

PEOPLE ON our east London housing estate are celebrating victory this week. We have stopped the NHS selling off a health clinic to a property developer to build luxury flats for profit.

When we learned that the NHS wanted to sell off the Barkantine Clinic on the Isle of Dogs we launched a fantastic fightback. It began with a meeting of over 80 residents.

Then we organised a march on nearby Canary Wharf, with banners saying "Health not wealth" and "Our health is not for sale".

We won support from trade unions and others who joined the march. We publicly vowed to occupy the clinic to stop the bulldozers.

After more angry meetings we decided direct action was needed. So we marched into the board meeting of the NHS trust, disrupted it and demanded to be heard.

We presented them with a Monopoly board game and showered them with the fake money to



RESIDENTS CELEBRATE victory

symbolise that they were being property speculators, not providing health services. This action rattled them and was the turning point in the campaign.

We have now won a complete victory. The clinic will not be sold off. There will be no luxury flats built in an area which has too many already.

Time to act

PAUL RODDY, a multiple sclerosis (MS) sufferer, is being harassed by Greater Manchester police. Paul uses cannabis to relieve his pain. He was found not guilty of possession by a jury.

But before he could leave the dock Paul was immediately rearrested and held overnight at a police station.

Time after time juries refuse to convict sick and disabled people with conditions such as MS, cancer or arthritis. A phone poll conducted by the *Manchester Evening News* last week showed 88 percent of readers in favour of legislation of cannabis for medical use. Yet Jack Straw still refuses to act.

□PENNY KAY, Manchester

School payoff

MY SCHOOL, Collingswood, Stevenage, is the first to call for no-cover action in Hertfordshire. The school is renowned for its union organisation.

We have now been given a government one-off payment of £23,000, to be distributed among staff, for consistently improving results.

Who says militant teachers let kids down? And how nice of the government to contribute to my election expenses, because that's what I'll use this disgusting little bribe for!

□JON BERRY, secretary Herts NUT teachers' union and Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate for Watford

Stopping the Nazis

MASS PRESSURE from anti-Nazi forced Leeds University to cancel a Nazi "Free Speech Society" meeting last month.

This upholds our no platform for fascists policy, endorsed by over 600 students at a union meeting recently.

In the event about half a dozen Nazis, including BNP leader Nick Griffin, wandered around that evening but were unable to meet.

□CHRISTIAN HOGSBJERG, Leeds

Anti-racism

1,000 make stand against Nazis

THE NATIONAL Front was routed in Oldham last Saturday after 1,000 people attended an anti-racist rally.

It was called by Oldham United Against Racism and Oldham NUT teachers' union, and supported by the TGWU transport union.

Speakers included local Labour MP Phil Woolas, the ex-MEP and Anti Nazi League treasurer Glyn Ford, the current MEP Arlene McCarthy, myself as Oldham NUT president, councillors, and trade union and community organisation representatives.

After the rally a delegation of 100 people went into the centre of town to leaflet and effectively became an impromptu march through the centre of Oldham.

We marched despite some very heavy-handed

policing (with over 20 police vans, ten horses and nearly 200 police), and the fascists didn't even show up.

The mood was disciplined and peaceful, celebrating our right to march through the town centre, and showing in action the principle of black and white, unite and fight.

Mass meetings of 300, 400 and 500 people have taken place, in various communities.

The council executive, through the chief education officer, tried to pressurise us to call off the march, claiming in a letter to me that "any march would be a catalyst for violence" and equating us with the fascists.

However, due to the mass meetings, all the councillors came out in favour of the march and rally.

The council did its best

to demobilise the event by getting the education authority to contact headteachers to advise staff not to go to the rally, despite being called by the biggest teachers' union—the NUT!

We welcomed the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, including a contingent of Kurdish refugees who postponed their Manchester demo to come to Oldham to show solidarity against the fascists.

Every time New Labour and Jack Straw were mentioned there was spontaneous jeering and anger.

Lots of people took Socialist Alliance stickers and were urging us to stand in the area as they are sick of the betrayals of Labour and its racist policies. Saturday was just the beginning.

●JASON TRAVIS, president Oldham NUT

Socialist election challenge

All aboard for the campaign

SOCIALIST Alliance supporters have been out getting support around Britain over the past week.

In MANCHESTER around 140 people attended a Socialist Alliance rally on Wednesday of last week.

The meeting attracted pensioners, trade unionists and people from local campaigns.

People were boosted by the news that lecturers in the NATFHE union in a Manchester-wide college had voted to support Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate for Withington John Clegg by 19 votes to two earlier that day.

The Save our Bolton Schools campaign also backed the Socialist Alliance with a donation of £65.

An impressive £1,700 was collected for the Socialist Alliance on the night.

YORK's challenge to New Labour was kickstarted at a lively 70-strong public meeting last week.

Speakers included Doug Cook of the Residents' Association at Clifton, one of



York's biggest council estates.

He spoke from the heart about council residents' fears about the threatened sell-off of council houses.

Doug said that he had become aware of the Socialist Alliance through people coming to the estate to talk to residents.

Local socialist Frank Ormston spoke of the Coppergate II campaign.

This aims to thwart the council's plan to sell off land around the ancient castle keep, Clifford's Tower, in order to build a huge shopping complex.

As one member of the audience said, "The council will take York from the people and put it into the pockets of the capitalists."

After an open debate Frank was elected as the York Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate. In just one week York Socialist Alliance raised over £2,000 for the election campaign.

In EDMONTON in north London socialist activist and writer Tariq Ali addressed the launch meeting of the Socialist Alliance on Wednesday of last week.

Howard Medwell, the local Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate, spoke about the campaign against the Edmonton incinerator and said people resented the fact that a working class area was effectively being used as a dustbin.

●Reports from MATTHEW COOKSON, PAUL DAVIES and IAN BIRCHALL

Govanhill Pool

THE OCCUPATION of Govanhill Pool in Glasgow is gathering momentum.

Activists have occupied the pool for two weeks against its threatened closure.

Last Saturday, the day the council was to officially close the pool, some 500 people showed their defiance and came to a rally at the pool.

But the council is determined to go ahead with the closure.

Local resident and campaigner Sam Davis said, "The speed with which the decision was made got me so angry I just had to get involved."

"This shows just what the council think of the people of Govanhill. There's been no consultation at all. We're supposed to be living in a democracy!"

■The campaign has to spread the action as wide as possible. If you want to give support please visit <http://crowd.to/saveourpool> or e-mail saveourpool@aol.com

Education

OVER 140 further education lecturers in the EIS lecturers' union walked out of Stevenson College, Edinburgh, on Tuesday of last week on a half-day unofficial strike.

This effectively shut the college down. Management wants restructuring and savings of up to £4 million, which could cost dozens of jobs.

The strikers then went on to lobby the funding council.

■Send messages of support to eis@stevenson.ac.uk

MORE THAN 60 staff and students took part in a lively protest outside the University of Sunderland board of governors' meeting on Thursday of last week.

The protest was called by the NATFHE lecturers' union against the university management's threat to courses and slashing of 140 jobs.

A large contingent of geology students wearing hard hats brandished placards and booed as some of the governors drove in.

Both NATFHE and UNISON at the university are to ballot for action against the redundancies

●STEVE CANNON, NATFHE branch secretary, University of Sunderland

Bradford

Anger boils over

ANGER ERUPTED in Bradford on Friday of last week after an all-white jury acquitted Jonathan Fairbank, who had been charged with the murder of Mohammed Asghar last year.

Fairbank claimed he killed Asghar, a takeaway owner, in self defence.

About 400 people, mainly young Asians, spontaneously demonstrated in the town centre on hearing the verdict.

They tried to block the M62 motorway in protest but were cordoned off by the police.

Arfan said, "The police nearly ran us down. One of my friends was clubbed with a baton."

Usman and Abdullah said, "We stopped buses and cars. Some shop windows were smashed."

"People want justice. We want to let the police, the courts and the politicians know that we will have justice."

About 100 people, black and white, rallied in the town centre the following day.

Khalid Aziz said, "Mohammed and I were friends years ago in Pakistan. He was a kind, helpful, peaceful man. I feel like I have lost my own brother."

Mahmood Chaudhry added, "The police know we will not keep quiet until we get justice."

"We need a campaign uniting black and white. Jack Straw's attacks on asylum seekers are appalling. He and the Tories are making the racists confident."

"We are going to protest outside Bradford Crown Court on Monday."

■Protest outside Bradford Crown Court, 9am, Monday 9 April. Bring banners and placards.

□ANTI-NAZI campaigners are mobilising to stop a planned Nazi National Front (NF) "Keep Bermondsey white" march through Bermondsey in south London this Saturday.

Support for the counter-demonstration, called by Southwark Trades Council and the Anti Nazi League, has included Greater London Assembly member Valerie Shawcross, and the local Socialist Alliance and Labour prospective parliamentary candidates.

■Stop the Nazi NF march, 10.30am Saturday 7 April, South Bermondsey. For more information contact the Anti Nazi League on 020 7924 0333.

Bristol



A CAR and lorry cavalcade toured the Bristol South constituency last Saturday to highlight opposition to the next round of education cuts proposed by the Labour council.

They were also demonstrating support for the prospective parliamentary candidate Socialist Alliance candidate, local teacher Brian Drummond.

The event was organised by a group of ex-teachers from the local Merrywood School, recently closed by the council and now rented out as a film set for the TV show Teachers.

Chris Carter, who worked at the school, said "The impact of the school's closure on the local area was devastating. We need local schools for local communities."

solidarity meeting, where people expressed huge anger at Israel's bombing of the West Bank.

At the same time 50 students attended an uplifting CND meeting.

●ANDREW STONE



●SATURDAY 7 APRIL Manchester demonstration in support of refugees. As-

semble 12 noon, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester. Called by the Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.

●SATURDAY 7 APRIL Challenging racism—a conference called by the Wales TUC. 11am-3pm, Cardiff City Hall. Pre-booking essential.

Phone Wales TUC on 02920 372 345 or e-mail

Round-up

DOZENS OF people joined a rally with shop workers and Socialist Alliance supporters to oppose the closure of the local Sainsbury's store in Dagenham, east London, last Saturday. The area faces the loss of thousands of jobs at the giant Ford Dagenham plant.

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE supporters in Portsmouth and Southampton hit their local railway stations on Monday of this week to demand the renationalisation of the railways.

Around 30 supporters in Portsmouth crowded onto the station concourse carrying placards and collecting signatures from rail passengers.

MEMBERS OF Huddersfield Socialist Alliance have been out leafleting and petitioning on the working class Brackenhall Estate.

We were invited by tenants who want to fight Kirklees council's plans to "regenerate" their estate.

This involves demolishing a large part of the estate and allowing a private developer to build homes for sale on the more desirable

edges of the area.

A recent packed meeting of over 300 tenants showed the depth of anger to the plans. Tenants are planning to march from the estate to the town hall on 19 April to lobby councillors.

●CATHERINE MCGURK

WIGAN SOCIALIST Alliance now holds two weekly meetings. We send out letters to all members for our organisational meeting on Tuesday nights, and we push a minimum of 1,000 leaflets through doors to build for the constituency meetings.

We have a weekly input into the local paper, two Saturday stalls, and an average of 25 people at each meeting. A recent meeting on asylum seekers attracted 35 people.

●BARRY CONWAY

SOUTHWARK Socialist Alliance held a fantastic fundraising social last weekend. Over £1,200 was raised (after expenses).

Some 200 people packed the Hatcham Club for a great night out. The event pulled many shop stewards and activists from the local labour movement.

inspiration of the anti-capitalist protests coloured the conference.

Delegates criticised PFI, at home, and supported the Genoa demo at the G8 summit in July.

But there was frustration and disappointment at delays to recognition agreements and wasted opportunities for a real fight over pay and conditions.

The conference really came alive when a delegate from the Express newspapers voiced the enormous anger over 150 job losses.

But no strategy for a real fight came from the leadership.

The widespread attraction of the Socialist Alliance was clearly evident, with pledges and collections for the election campaign.

Even after a motion supporting the Alliance was ruled out of order, delegates were urged to come back next year with a rule change to allow it to be debated.

●PHIL TURNER, NUJ union conference delegate

NUS conference

Students in political mood

A LARGE section of last week's National Union of Students conference in Blackpool was determined to push for a genuine fightback in the colleges.

Some of the biggest cheers came for speakers promoting collective action against the government's theft of the grant and imposition of tuition fees.

The overwhelmingly Blairite Labour Students group did not dare to stand openly for the presidency.

"Independent" Owain James could only be re-elected by hiding his New Labour membership.

Members of the left United for Free Education slate won three posts on the national executive committee.

Helen Salmon of the SWP got elected on a platform of promising "to be a trouble-

maker" against fees and the government.

The most encouraging feature of conference was the number, size and vitality of campaigning fringe meetings.

Over 100 people packed the Socialist Alliance meeting, where Red Pepper magazine editor Hillary Wainwright expressed her belief that the Socialist Alliance could build a serious left challenge to Blair.

Some 130 came to listen to George Monbiot and Babs MacGregor of Trident Ploughshares at the Globalise Resistance meeting.

The excitement of the developing anti-capitalist movement was directed into building the G8 protest in Genoa.

There was also a fantastic 160 people at a Palestinian

NUJ conference

"OUR TIME has come." That was how NUJ union president Dave Toomer summed up the launch of the Socialist Alliance at the union's annual conference.

He was speaking at an electric fringe meeting attended by around a quarter of the 100 plus delegates.

He was joined by strikers from the Dudley hospitals and the

Hull caravans dispute, and Oxford Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate John Lister.

Dave had earlier used the same words to describe the rebirth of the union inside workplaces across the country as journalists voted by huge majorities for the NUJ to represent them.

Hatred of New Labour and the

Fighting PFI

Taking on privateers

OVER 200 trade unionists met in London last weekend to discuss fighting the government's privatisation plans under PFI and PPP schemes.

The conference was called by the Dudley health strikers, and was backed by the national executive of the RMT rail union, the health executive of the public sector UNISON union, and the London regional councils of the ASLEF, FBU, MSF and RMT unions.

Some 41 Dudley strikers, who finished their latest round of strike action against PFI on Monday of this week, came to the conference.

Tony Benn MP said, "We need to get across that we are talking about the future of our society as well as the future of our hospitals, schools, tube and fire service."

Break

"We want to run them for ourselves, for our benefit, and not just to be slaves to some multinational corporation."

RMT assistant general secretary Bob Crow went down a storm when he gave an enthusiastic report from last week's tube strike, and said:

"I'm fed up of people who say we have to abide by the law. There is one law we know, and that's don't cross picket lines."

Dave Walton from the national executive of the Fire Brigades Union condemned the Labour government for betraying workers.

As well as the Dudley strikers, a group of tube, council and health workers, and other campaigners came along to debate how to fight back.

John Robson from the ASLEF-RMT joint trains council spoke of the importance of the union leadership being prepared to break the law.

Activists agreed that they should support the protests against the big business agenda of world leaders in Genoa this July.

DUDLEY health workers will start another three-week strike against the sell-off of their jobs to the private sector this Friday.

Little Plumstead

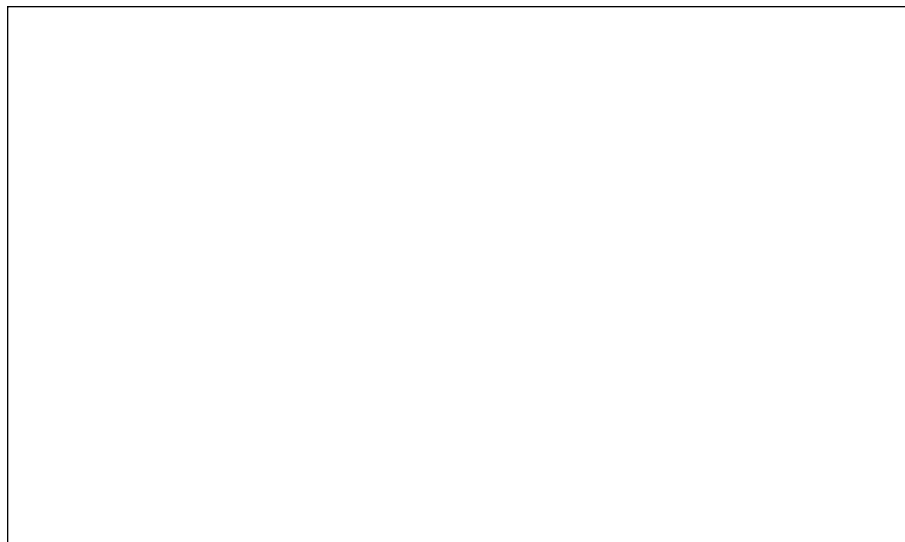
DOMESTIC workers at Little Plumstead Hospital in Norwich have won an improvement in pay and conditions after a 98 percent vote in favour of strike action. They have won concessions from private cleaning contractors ISS.

The workers, members of the UNISON union, called off action scheduled for Wednesday after they were offered a 2.8 percent pay rise plus other improvements.

UNISON steward Barry Rodi said, "The mere threat of industrial action has forced management into a compromise."

"Imagine what we could have got if we'd actually struck."

Anti-Trident protest



Picture: DOUGLAS ROBERTSON

DEMONSTRATORS MEETING after the Scottish appeal court declared the Trident nuclear system was illegal

Bus workers

Sacked over an e-mail

OVER 100 engineers working for London United, which operates bus services in south west London, went on official strike on Friday of last week against the sacking of two workers.

The one-day strike was due to be followed by a 48-hour strike from Monday evening.

The dispute began after

management sacked two engineers following a private e-mail sent between their home computers in February.

The e-mail ridiculed one of the managers, and the engineer who received it pinned it up on the works noticeboard.

The joke referred to management getting caught out by the workers' TGWU union over a safety issue.

The workers are convinced management is using the incident to attack TGWU convenor Godfrey "Abey" Aberdeen.

He and a member of the AEEU union have been sacked for "conspiracy to undermine and harass" a manager.

Bus drivers were not balloted but have supported the strike by taking collections across the garages.

Postal workers

ABOUT 200 people came to a public meeting last week to build the campaign to keep NDO postal sorting office open.

Royal Mail management wants to close the north London office and move the work to Greenford in Middlesex.

The closure would mean 1,300 jobs taken out of Islington.

The CWU union branch at NDO is set to start a strike ballot and also plans a demonstration in May.

Pete Donaghy, the CWU branch secretary at the office, told the meeting, "This job transfer will be disastrous for the very many people who cannot follow the work."

"There are single parents who work shifts they can only just manage now. It is ridiculous to think they can go to Greenford."

Janine Booth, the Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate for the area, was one of the speakers.

She said, "Jobs are not being lost—they are being wilfully destroyed by people who hold public office. It is a disgrace the local MP Chris Smith is not here."

Jeremy Corbyn, the left



SPEAKERS AT the Save NDO rally last week

wing Labour MP for Islington North, said, "Alan Johnson, now a minister but previously the head of the CWU, wrote to me saying that the NDO question was an 'operational decision', and that the government would not get involved. That's just not acceptable."

Dave Ward, the CWU's

London divisional rep, said that the Post Office had to be made to stick to its original policy.

This was for an investment of £250 million to upgrade and modernise the existing offices.

In the discussion there were speeches from a local firefighter, a tube worker,

teachers, campaigners over the local park closure, and people against Islington council cuts.

Send messages of support to CWU North/Northwest London Branch, Room C102, North London Mail Centre, 5-8 Almeida Street, Islington, London N11 1AA. Phone 020 7239 3593. Fax 020 7239 3570.

Council workers

Big step towards 35 hours

UNISON UNION members in Knowsley, Merseyside, have won a victory which will inspire all council workers facing attacks.

Six days of council-wide strike action over two months and a two-week strike by key groups of workers in the finance department forced the Labour-run council's bosses to concede most of the workers' demands.

The working week for all council workers will be harmonised at 35 hours for manual as well as white collar workers.

The council wanted to raise the white collar working week to the 37 hours that manuals have worked up to now.

It imposed a 37-hour week for

anyone who was promoted and new starters from 1 February.

The deal it has been forced to accept now means that workers on a 35-hour week can be promoted without working more hours.

All council workers on a 37-hour week will work a 36-hour week in three years, and a 35-hour week by 2008.

Victory

The weakness in the deal is that new starters will still start on 37 hours until the reduction to 36 hours in 2004. The strike could have won a total victory.

UNISON nationally should be raising the demand for a 35-hour standard working week for all council workers.

●**DAVE McNALLY**

Round-up

□ **A WORK to rule by over 5,000 council workers in Plymouth was continuing at the start of this week as negotiations took place.**

But the council still proposes to find £642,000 from the workforce by April next year, and to close two homes for older people and three libraries.

●**TONY STAUNTON, Plymouth UNISON branch secretary (personal capacity) Send messages of support to UNISON, 13 Windsor Place, The Hoe, Plymouth PL1 2HN. Fax 01752 661 108.**

□ **STRIKERS AT Westminster's homeless persons unit returned to work after an indefinite strike over privatisation which began on 21 March.**

Union officials said they legally had to return when the service was privatised on Monday of this week.

The new contractor, WMS Haywards, has refused to give the workers any guarantees over conditions.

The workers' UNISON

union says a new strike ballot will go ahead unless it gets those guarantees.

●**PASQUALE TESTA**

□ **THE UNISON union branch secretary at Bolton council, Bernie Gallagher, has been re-elected with a majority of 237 votes despite the fact that UNISON has expelled her from the union, pending an appeal.**

UNISON members in Bolton are furious with the union's witch-hunt against leading activists.

They also voted unanimously at a 200-strong meeting to send two delegates to the anti-debt protest in Genoa in July.

□ **SOCIAL WORKERS in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, last week voted overwhelmingly to ballot for strike action in response to the council's refusal to backdate a grading claim.**

●**PAT JONES**

□ **UNISON members at Telford & Wrekin council have started a work to rule against the victimisation of the branch service conditions officer, Mike Jeffries.**

UNISON health conference

DELEGATES to UNISON health conference last week voted unanimously to abandon the union's failed "twin track approach" of piecemeal opposition PFI in the health service.

UNISON's health group executive is now committed to develop a new nationally coordinated strategy.

Pressure forced union leaders to back the policy changes.

It should now name dates for a day of action and a

national demonstration.

An emergency motion from Dudley was also passed.

It commits the union to organise a delegation, including strikers, to health ministers to state that if the Dudley project goes ahead UNISON will run a series of adverts in the national press stating that the government is privatising the NHS.

●**MARK NEW, branch secretary, Dudley Group of Hospitals**

In brief

□ **JAYLESBURY VALE District Council tenants, in Buckinghamshire, have decisively rejected the proposed transfer of 8,000 properties to a local housing company by four to one in a ballot.**

□ **ABOUT 70 people heckled council officials at a meeting in Newport, South Wales, on Thursday of last week.**

The Labour-run council plans to build a new school on the Glebelands parklands, which sit on untreated waste, under a PFI scheme.

Round-up

□ **POSTAL WORKERS at the East London Mail Centre in Whitechapel suspended an official strike over new working practices due for Monday this week, but they could be out next week.**

□ **SHORT unofficial strikes took place in Streatham and Willesden in London last week.**

□ **POSTAL WORKERS in Watford were set to strike on Friday and Saturday.**

Anti-nuclear

OVER 100 anti-nuclear protesters staged a protest in Plymouth last week against plans to increase radioactive discharges from the Trident submarine base by 500 percent.

And 450 people packed a meeting called by the Environment Agency as part of a three-month public consultation.

Private dockyard owners DML are to increase tritium discharges into the public sewage system and atmosphere

when the refit of Vanguard class nuclear submarines begins later this year.

At the meeting Dr Alexander Matthews from the World Disarmament Campaign questioned officials:

"If the dumping of tritium is so safe then how come the rates for cancer in Plymouth are 25 percent higher for men and 29 percent higher for women compared with the rest of England and Wales?"

Socialist Worker

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE ON THE MOVE

New forces join left's challenge

TONY BLAIR has put the general election on hold until 7 June, but the socialist campaign is steaming ahead.

The campaign is winning support from people who have long been loyal to Labour but are now backing a socialist challenge to New Labour.

Chesterfield has for many years been the parliamentary seat of the left wing Labour MP Tony Benn, who is retiring from parliament at the general election.

The fight is on in the city to continue the socialist tradition that Benn stands for.

As the local Peak FM radio put it, "If you want a chance to vote for a socialist like Tony Benn then you can vote in the general election for Jeannie Robinson, who is running for the newly formed Socialist Alliance."

Jeannie works as a lecturer in primary education, helping train the people we need to give our children a decent education, and is a well known socialist campaigner in Chesterfield.

New Labour has insulted the tradition that Tony Benn has represented in Chesterfield by picking Reg Race as its candidate.

Few local people have ever seen Race involved in any campaigns in the area.

His main local claim to fame is that he moved a motion at a Labour Party meeting backing the expulsion of left wing MEP Ken

Coates from the Labour Party a few years ago.

Ken is now backing Jeannie Robinson and the Socialist Alliance. "I represented the Labour Party for a very long time," he says. "There is an enormous amount of disquiet about the way the government is ignoring the needs and wishes of the people who have always supported Labour."

"Jeannie Robinson would make an excellent MP for Chesterfield. Unlike New Labour, Jeannie Robinson and the North Derbyshire Socialist Alliance stand firmly for the rights of working class people."

The area around Chesterfield has been hit hard by the rundown of the coal mines. There has been a wave of new job losses in the area.

The government stood by and allowed the St Gobain multinational to axe 700 jobs by shutting down



IAN RUTHERFORD: sacked under New Labour



the Biwater pipe factory in Clay Cross.

Now hundreds of jobs are under threat at both the Stirling tubes and Dema glass factories.

At Dema 110 jobs have already gone and another 400 are under threat.

Andy Parkes is an AEEU union steward at Dema and a former key local Labour Party member. He is backing the Socialist Alliance:

"When John Smith was alive the policies of Labour were more socialist. But when Blair and Mandelson came in and got rid of Clause Four I realised it was time for me to go."

"There is lot of discontent with Labour, and a lot of people who feel like me, and a good many might decide to vote for the Socialist Alliance."

"Basically what we have is a Labour government betraying working class people, and that sticks in my craw. That's where my anger is coming from."

On a recent Socialist Alliance stall in the centre of Chesterfield that feeling came up time and again.

Ian Rutherford worked at Biwater in Clay Cross: "I can't understand how a Labour government in a Labour stronghold can stand by and let 700 jobs go. Who's running the country, a Labour government or big business?"

Keith Milliner came into Chesterfield from Bolsover to help out on the Socialist Alliance stall. "I was in the Labour Party," said Keith. "I'm 59 and an ex-miner. I worked in the pits for 33 years."

"Tony Blair says there are jobs around. Well, there are 3,000 people on the dole in Bolsover, and there are no jobs."

John Nuttall lives in Clay Cross just outside Chesterfield. He is a former Labour councillor in North Derbyshire and a well known local figure:

"Four years of a Labour government! You can't believe it—the sleaze, and that they are spending less of the country's wealth than the Tories on health and education."

"And the way Jack Straw and Tony Blair have treated refugees is worse than the Tories—absolutely appalling."

"Blair talks about 'bog-standard' comprehensive schools. The truth is we've got a bog-standard government, and bog-standard MPs and ministers."

"The Socialist Alliance gives people an alternative."



SOCIALIST ALLIANCE candidate Jeannie Robinson campaigning with former Labour MEP Ken Coates

Ken Loach to direct election broadcast

AWARD-WINNING socialist film director Ken Loach has agreed to make the TV election broadcast for the Socialist Alliance.

The Alliance has already selected 88 prospective parliamentary candidates, meeting the 88-candidate threshold for a broadcast set by the BBC and ITV.

In Scotland socialist film actor Peter Mullen will be helping make an election broadcast for the Scottish Socialist Party, which plans to contest all

72 parliamentary seats in the country. Mullen starred in Ken Loach's film *My Name is Joe*.

Loach, who has made a string of powerful films from *Kes* to *Land and Freedom*, is enthusiastic about the socialist challenge to New Labour:

"I think it was a very positive and constructive move for all those people who opposed the right wing drift of Blair's government to come together to make a coherent critique from the left."

"I think it's something really new in British politics. Suddenly there's a coherent voice of the left to oppose the right wing Labour and Conservative parties."

Socialist Alliance groups will be keeping up the campaign through to 7 June, seeking to unite the biggest possible numbers of people who are disillusioned with New Labour.

Local Socialist Alliance groups are holding weekly constituency meetings. ●see page 12

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